
This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

GoogleTM books

<https://books.google.com>



HD WIDENER



HW DY9X 6

Marion Manning

Edith Eustis



HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Emma Goldschmidt Lenz

MARION MANNING

A Novel

by

EDITH EUSTIS



New York and London
Harper & Brothers Publishers
1902

894103

Copyright, 1902, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

All rights reserved.

Published May, 1902.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
WIDENER LIBRARY

**TO
MY FATHER**

Part 1

MARION MANNING

I

*"Standing, with reluctant feet,
Where the brook and river meet,
Womanhood and childhood fleet."*

—LONGFELLOW.

"SHE is a child of nature in some ways, and is singularly unaffected by ordinary conventionalities."

Mrs. Caring paused to count the stitches on her knitting-needle.

"Eighteen, twenty, twenty-two; that's all right. What was I saying—Oh, about Marion. She is full of ideals and illusions, too; thinks the world is made of pure crystal, and that people are all twenty-four-carat gold. I firmly believe that she has clothed the fairy prince who is to come into her life with all the virtues of the gods, and that she waits confidently for his coming. It will go hard for her if he is not all she imagines him." She stopped talking again. Her knitting slipped to her lap and she scrutinized the man she was addressing. He, intent on his occupation of drawing lines with a paper-cutter on the velvet cover of the table which touched his chair, did not notice her glance.

"No," she continued. "She is not the kind of girl

MARION MANNING

whom you could make happy. You are all ice and mind; she, all fire and heart. If she fell in love with you, she would think you quite different from what you are. The awakening would probably—kill her! The woman you should marry is a woman of the world, who would understand you, who would be ambitious and clever, rather cold, who would be content with a little, and not, like this child, want all or nothing."

The man smiled. "You have a good opinion of me, it seems. But I thought this girl was clever; that she had ideas, ability."

"Oh, she has ideas, plenty of them, and strong opinions, too. But her ideas are all inspired by enthusiasm. You see she doesn't reason about things; she knows them instinctively; feels them so strongly, too, that they either make her happy or plunge her into the depths of gloom. I think that she must worship what she cares for—causes, deeds, or men. She could never forgive deception. On the whole, her disposition doesn't promise happiness; to my mind, at least. But, remember, you mustn't play with her, Mr. Manning, because, though I am a friend of yours, still I am particularly fond of her, and you are too different from her to satisfy her needs."

"Mrs. Caring"—her companion rejoined, rising from his seat and standing before her with his hands in his pockets—"you are like every other woman—you jump at conclusions. I have never said that I wanted to marry any one, nor do I. Miss Heveril is pretty, and just because I ask you if she is as attractive as she looks, you immediately marry us off. Do let me keep my freedom a little while longer, and let us search instead for a more worthy aspirant to her hand."

Mrs. Caring laughed, then sighed:

"I don't know whether it is an advantage to be

MARION MANNING

born with or without money," she mused. "Her fortune won't help her to obtain what *she* most wants. As for me, it's always a question of economizing to make ends meet, to pay bills, etc. I never have enough money to suit me, and always long for more. So, I should imagine, do you. You have the tastes of a millionaire—"

"Without the millions," interrupted John Manning. "You are quite right. No one is satisfied. Money is a bane to one person and would save another. Still, Miss Heveril will find her fortune useful. I should not advise her to give it all to the poor."

"What are you going to do next?" asked the pretty, low-voiced woman, looking with interest at the man before her, who, whatever his faults, had yet the elements of greatness in him.

"I don't know," he answered; "I haven't made up my mind yet." He walked up and down the small room with his brows knit and his eyes fixed on the ground. "It's very difficult to decide. Here—in politics, a career is more a name than a fact. The threads pull in all different directions. You can't tell always which one you must pull, which is the strongest; and once arrived, a whim, a puff of wind may unseat you, leave you stranded; and yet, to wield influence and power is the only thing worth living for." He forgot the silent figure in the arm-chair and talked to himself in low, tense voice. "To feel that by your brain, your force, you can hold men in your grasp, and compel their recognition; that you have possibilities in you to accomplish almost anything. And then to be hampered and cramped by vulgar details, by commonplace wants. Why, men have bartered their souls for power and I—" he broke off, suddenly, and strode to the window where the gusty rain beat upon the glass-panes, and the mist hid the distant view

MARION MANNING

of the park glades and hills. "By George! Mrs. Caring," he said at last, turning back to where she sat, "how could you make me talk like that? I have never done such a thing before. But it is all your fault. I have made a fool of myself, and your sympathy is to blame. Will you forget it all?" he added, sitting down on a stool beside her, "and believe in me a little?"

"I don't know," she answered, hesitatingly. "I think I am a little afraid of you. I have an idea that you could be cruel if an obstacle stood in your path. I should not care to be that obstacle. But, as there is no danger of that, and as you are a most delightful companion, and a friend, too, I hope, let's stand on that."

"And shake hands over it," he replied, taking one of her hands in his.

"Very well," she said, after a moment; "but now, you must live up to my faith in you."

A few moments later John Manning left the room, and Mrs. Caring remained alone to muse over the conversation which had just taken place, and to recall some of the history of the man with whom she had been talking. In her opinion he was a great man, or, at any rate, he would be, one day or another. And already he had achieved what might fairly be called a national reputation, and was on the high road to success. She remembered how proud she had been a year ago to claim him as a friend, when all America had rung with his exploits in the Far East—exploits which had saved the foreign population in the town where he was from a fanatical outbreak and threatened massacre. Mrs. Caring thought that all the adulation he had received after this feat, when his coolness and promptitude had received the thanks of more than one government, might easily have spoiled

MARION MANNING

him and turned his head. But he had gone through it all wonderfully well. And yet, to her mind, he was not the man whom Marion Heveril should marry.

Of his life before she had met him she knew but the bare facts. That he was a native of a seaport town of New Hampshire, that his parents had been poor, and that he had won a scholarship which had sent him to Harvard. Few of the men whom she knew, who had been there with him, had ever known him; evidently he had studied hard, and kept clear of sports, and had cared nothing for popularity. She knew, however, that he had done some literary work before he left college, which had secured for him a travelling scholarship and sent him to a German university. On his return to America he had settled down in his native town, gone into municipal politics, and finally had represented his district in the Assembly. And a year later, his love of adventure had made him accept the secretaryship at the Eastern post which had brought him to the front. His political friends had strongly advised him, at the time, not to give up politics for diplomacy; but he had been obdurate, and fortune had favored his step. While in Asia he distinguished himself further by writing a book which took rank as an authority on his particular section of the East.

And now he was at home again, his powers greatly developed, his ambition stronger than it had ever been, determined, by all means in his power, to attain political success. And the worst of it all was, Mrs. Caring reflected, as she put away her work and prepared to rejoin her guests, that while he was resting on his oars, chance had brought about, in her house, a meeting with Marion Heveril.

There was a world of difference between them. She was a girl of twenty, he a grown man of thirty-three; she had passed all her life in Virginia, he had trav-

MARION MANNING

elled over half the world; she had few friends, he was already a man of mark. And yet fate threw them together.

The first time he saw her, her beauty made a deep impression on him. Later, he heard that she had a large fortune. They were both stopping at Elton, the country-house of their mutual friend, Mrs. Caring, and it was there, on one warm November day of Indian summer, that John Manning first had an opportunity to observe closely the girl he had admired. It was in the garden, from a hidden nook, whither he had retreated in search of solitude and for a quiet hour with his book, that she and another member of the house-party had obtruded themselves on his sight and hearing. They had seated themselves not many feet away from him under a maple-tree which was vivid from the touch that autumn had laid on it, and were so deeply engaged in conversation that they did not notice him. The girl's whole attention was engrossed by what they were saying. She was interested and absorbed. It was not until several minutes had elapsed that the words they spoke reached his ears. Then he was astonished at what he heard.

"But, Miss Heveril," the man was saying, "fanaticism and superstition *must* do more harm than good."

"Oh no; how can you say that?" she answered; "it's far better for the poor people who have to struggle for existence to believe in some religion, even if it is mostly superstition. It makes things possible for them; it gives them something to live for. The savage worshipping his bits of shining rock, or clinging fast to the belief in some far-off country where all his wrongs shall be righted, his hunger appeased, and his enemies overcome, is happier in clinging to this hope than he would be with nothing of promise in sight." Poor thing, it makes him content! She was in-

MARION MANNING

tense and absolutely sincere. She meant all that she said.

"Oh, if it makes them happy, don't let us demur," the man said, evidently more interested in her than in the superstitions of the lower classes. "But how about the fanaticism?" He smiled to see the perplexity come into her face, and rose from his half-recumbent position to watch her better. She lifted her hands from the grass and put them up behind her head, while a half-frown gathered on her forehead. Suddenly she looked at him.

"Doesn't fanaticism mean enthusiasm, also? Don't you suppose that if you were really absorbed by a cause that you would care for nothing else, but think of it all the time, night and day, and believe in it so firmly that you wouldn't listen when people reasoned with you against it? You couldn't help becoming narrow then, with only one strong idea in your mind, and your life would be full of excitement and of enthusiasm! Wouldn't it be almost necessary to be fanatical if one was a reformer, or an inventor, or an explorer?" She paused for a moment, with her eyes staring straight before her, then smiled archly. "Sometimes people are considered fanatics until their cause is proved good. Wasn't Columbus called a fanatic when he told people that the earth was round?"

"Bravo!" cried a voice, and Manning strode up to them. "I couldn't help overhearing, and, by George! Miss Heveril, you argue well, and Jim has acquitted himself poorly. Let me enter the lists, will you? What shall we discuss?" and he threw himself on the grass beside her. But Marion's cheeks were scarlet, and she rose slowly from the ground.

"I did not think that we were overheard," she said, "and I can't discuss to order. Besides, it's time to go in." Her companion chuckled to himself as he leaped

MARION MANNING

to his feet to follow the girl, and he could not resist giving a triumphant look at the discomfited intruder.

"By Georgel" muttered Manning to himself, as he settled himself down once more with his book. Then he burst out laughing. "Well, well; she has spirit! There's no doubt of it! But she is much too pretty to have any." He began to read again, but a subtle memory of her lingered like a charm with him, and his thoughts did not attend to the volume which previously had engrossed him.

The next time they met was in the drawing-room, a few minutes before dinner, and she looked away as she passed by him. A kind hostess, however, placed him next to her at dinner, and he gazed complacently at her friend of that afternoon, who sat at the other end of the long table. When she stopped talking to the man who was on her left, he bent towards her and said:

"Are you still angry with me? Won't you forgive me?" The pretty blush came again as she met his eyes.

"Oh, I was foolish," she answered; "I shouldn't have got angry; but I meant all I said, and thought that you were laughing at me. You see, we discuss a great deal at home, and when I am interested, I forget everything else. I am a little bit fanatical," smiling, "and that's why I hate to be laughed at."

"Will you believe me if I tell you that I wasn't laughing at you?" he said, seriously. "My words were light, it is true, but not my thoughts!" She did not answer, and there was a slight pause. Then, pointing to a portrait facing them on the wall, he began to talk to her about art, and so changed the subject. But his curiosity had been aroused, and he set to work to find out what he could of this strange and attractive girl. He was told before many hours had passed all that there was to know of Marion Heveril's history.

MARION MANNING

She was the only child of Alexander S. Heveril, formerly colonel in the Confederate army.

Colonel Heveril, a gentleman of the old school, came of a good family, and his name stood for tradition and conservatism, an embodiment of the past amid the quick changes of modern Virginia society. His home, an old colonial manor-house on the banks of the James River, had come to him from his father, together with a large fortune, consisting chiefly of slaves. The Civil War, however, had robbed him of his fortune and of many friends and relations, and at thirty-five he had been a broken-down man, with nothing left to him but his pride and an undying hate for the North. For ten years he had lived on his barren estate nursing his wrongs, until a kind friend had dragged him to Europe, where he met his wife. She was a Northerner and rich; but he loved her, forgave her the riches and her birth, and married her. After six months' travels they returned to Heveril Manor; the old house was restored, and embellished, as well, the lands were enriched, and by the strange irony of fate, and through gifts which the North had lavished upon him, the Colonel regained his health, his prosperity, and, more than these, his happiness.

A year after their return from Europe Marion was born, to bring added joy into the house. All the great love that her parents were capable of was showered upon the child, and they grudged neither trouble nor money to make her all that she should be, and to teach her all that her receptive mind could possibly absorb. When she was eight years old, however, her mother died, and at that early age she learned her first lesson of sorrow. From the little heiress that she had been, she then became the possessor of Mrs. Heveril's large fortune; but it was many long years before she realized the value of the money that was hers. When

MARION MANNING

she was eighteen years old her father took her to Richmond, and introduced her to what had been, before the war, the most aristocratic and exclusive society in the United States, and that still, though impoverished, shone in a cultivated and a gay fashion of its own. His uncompromising prejudices forbade her from seeing anything of the cosmopolitan society of Washington, and the rare occasions on which they visited that town had for their object business connected with the girl's fortune. While they were there, Marion was allowed to visit some of his old friends in Georgetown, but the houses of the capital were barred to her, and she therefore remained ignorant of the great social world and its vices and artificialities. Such was the uneventful history of the girl whom Mrs. Caring had described as a child of nature, brimful of illusions and ideals.

Notwithstanding her sound advice, Manning took good care to see as much of Marion Heveril as was possible during the remainder of their visit. He talked to her a great deal, and was delighted to find in her rare intelligence and that charm of conversation which is not always found with beauty. It was impossible for him not to be pleased and flattered, when talking of his own hopes and ambitions, by the earnestness and the intensity of the two eyes fastened on his face, by the breathless attention manifested, by the interest and admiration barely disguised for all he did and said.

"Why not? Why not?" he thought once or twice. She was everything he wanted: high-bred, beautiful, rich! Should he let this chance slip by him?

He could not keep his eyes from her at dinner the last evening of their visit; but when once or twice they met hers she looked away hastily. He did not

MARION MANNING

go to her side, however, when the men re-entered the drawing-room later on, but drew a low chair to Mrs. Caring's side, and joined in desultory conversation with her and two or three other members of his sex. Nevertheless, Mrs. Caring did not fail to intercept his glances, and she noticed, with a sigh, how the color came and went in the cheeks of the girl at the other end of the room. For Marion was talking disjointedly; queer sensations were creeping over her, making the room whirl at times, and the people beside her seem unreal and far off. How the evening went she did not know, until a voice broke on her ear and said:

"They are going up soon. Won't you show me first that print in the library that you were speaking of?" Marion rose obediently and followed Manning out of the room. "I wanted to get you away from all those people," he said, when they were in the quiet, dimly lit library. "Do you know that I shall not be able to forget you, nor what you have said to me?" She did not answer, but stood beside him with her eyes averted from him. "Do you know that it has done me good to have known you?" he went on, "that I should like to be your friend—may I?" He bent his head to look into her downcast face.

"Oh yes!" she said, very low, while her breath came quickly. "But sha'n't I see you again?" she asked, raising her shy, sweet eyes to his.

"Yes, we shall meet again," he answered, not quite steadily; "believe me, we will; good-bye, little girl; take care of yourself." The clock ticked loudly, voices could be heard in the adjoining hall. "Come, we must join them now!" She went after him silently, her face white, her eyes full of light, her heart beating very fast. As in a dream she said good-night to every one; she heard the chat-

MARION MANNING

ter about her and the laughter. He held out his hand to her.

“Good-night, Miss Heveril, and good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” she murmured, and they shook hands. Then, Mrs. Caring, noting the girl’s troubled face, put her arm in hers, and they went up-stairs together.

II

"Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty."

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE next day the party scattered, and Marion returned to Heveril Manor. Five months went by; but she did not see him again nor hear of his doings. Had he gone out of her life as suddenly as he had come into it? His silence disturbed her; the thought of his forgetfulness filled her mind, and yet she wondered why she should remember so fiercely if the recollection of it all had faded from his memory.

Then, after such long waiting, she saw him. It was in Washington, on one of those spring days when the sun works its annual miracle before our eyes, that they met once more. She was walking by herself on a little path which follows the winding of the pretty stream of Rock Creek, beyond the place where the road diverges from the water's edge and turns at right angles up the steep hills which rise behind it. Her mind was busy with the problems which heads older than hers have failed to solve. The unreasonableness of destiny perplexed her. If she was not to see him again, why should he have been thrown in her path? If all was to come to nought, why should her love have been awakened? She watched the turbulent creek at her feet with listless curiosity, wondering if *its* purpose of existence was compatible to its desires, or whether it also chafed at the banks that hemmed it in. She had taken her hat off, and now sat down on the trunk

MARION MANNING

of a tree which but that winter had been felled by a western storm. The warm, fresh breeze blew the stray locks of her hair about her face; all the voices of spring were in her ears, mingling with the sound of rushing water; the grass around her was alive with blue violets; the joy of the budding world was in the air and intoxicatingly filled her senses. She could not refrain from realizing this, from feeling it in all its fulness, and she surrendered her melancholy and her doubt to the sensations of the moment. For one brief hour she would forget the past and gain strength for the hours which were to come. Like Pippa, she thought: "If thou prove gentle, I shall borrow sufficient strength of thee for new years' sorrow." Then suddenly the sound of low laughter smote her ear, and turning round she saw two figures coming down the path towards her—a man and a woman. The woman she had never seen before—the man was John Manning!

She folded her hands together and did not stir. The advancing couple were walking very slowly and talking to each other in low tones. His head was bent, his eyes were fixed on the ground; hers looked straight before her, through lids that were half-opened. A spasm of jealousy contracted the girl's heart as she scanned the approaching woman with passionate curiosity. Who was she? What was she? A woman dressed in plain black, not tall, but slight and very supple, with an ease of carriage and motion which reminded Marion of the stately and graceful walk of a wild panther, with a white skin, and curious, strange eyes, which looked intense and fascinating. And, to crown it all, hair amber colored!—hair that would glow in the darkness, as burning embers do in a black chimney. Marion saw and trembled slightly, but did not move.

"She is a woman from the great outside world,"

MARION MANNING

she thought. "She has power, and knows it." She looked at Manning. For many months she had imagined and conjured up his face in her mind's eye. He was now before her. She saw all that was fine about him; his strength, his broad shoulders, his wide brow, the square chin; and she divined the restless, keen eyes which sought the ground, she pictured the smile which would soon soften the hard lines of his mouth. She did not criticise, and by so doing discover that his eyes were placed too closely together, that his lower lip was perhaps too full, and the upper thin and sharply cut. All this she did not notice, for she could see no defects in him.

As the stranger walked, a slight smile played about her lips, and every now and then she lifted her right hand to her face and pressed the loose violets she held to her nostrils, with deep and evident pleasure at their fresh spring perfume.

Suddenly she saw Marion, and a word from her made John Manning lift his head.

"Miss Heveril!" he exclaimed, with utter surprise, stepping forward and shaking hands with her warmly. "How delightful! Where did you come from? How strange that we should meet like this! Where are you staying?" And then, remembering his companion, "Do you know Mrs. Walford?" The latter stepped forward, and Marion rose to speak to her.

"I am very glad to see you," the elder woman said. "John has talked to me so much about you. I am a great friend of his, you know, and he has told me how he met you last autumn at Elton." Her eyes were wide open now and smiling.

"But tell me how you happen to be here?" interposed Manning.

"I am spending a few days in Washington with my father," Marion said. "We came on business;

MARION MANNING

but we are going home to-morrow." She had recovered her presence of mind, and was perfectly quiet and self-possessed. "Are you staying here, too?" she continued, looking at Mrs. Walford with polite interest.

"Oh, I am a Washingtonian," Mrs. Walford replied. "John is stopping with me, and we have been taking a drive, and, like you, were tempted by the freshness and beauty of Rock Creek. So we dismissed the carriage and shall walk home." Her low, musical voice thrilled the girl strangely, but she did not lose her self-control.

"Where do you live?" queried Manning, looking eagerly at Marion. "How near to Washington?"

"Oh, miles and miles from here, in Virginia," she answered, laughing. "You take the train first, and then drive five miles on a road, and then two miles through the place, and then—or else you can go by boat—"

"Much too difficult a place to find, evidently," rejoined Manning, rather gruffly.

"Well, you would have to try hard to find it," was the quick reply. Mrs. Walford looked at Marion with surprise, and then her eyes half-closed again. This was no unsophisticated country-maid, and she was dangerously pretty besides. They walked together for a few moments till they reached the road.

"That is your way," Marion said, pointing to the left. "Good - bye," she continued, holding out her hand to Mrs. Walford, and then to Manning, and before the latter had time to speak she had gone back to the woods.

"How pretty she is, your little friend!" the low voice said as they started homeward. "And, John, what a sweet face!" He looked at his companion, but did not answer.

Meanwhile Marion was walking towards the city.

MARION MANNING

Thoughts and sensations, contradictory and strange, were crowding in upon her, for her brain and heart were at variance. The joy of meeting, the happiness which had come to her from seeing him again, from hearing him speak, from being near him, conflicted with the emotions and fears which the sight of Mrs. Walford had awakened in her. She wondered who she was, how much he liked her, how long they had known each other. She was afraid and yet hopeful, happy and yet miserable. She had learned one fact, however, which comforted her—he had not forgotten her. She had read the pleasure in his look when he had first seen her, and she dwelt on the present joy, and banished from her mind all thought of the uncertain future.

The following day she and her father returned to the James River, and the hours and the days passed.

The next time she and John Manning met was on the Heveril dock by the James River, when the Richmond day-boat stopped at the pier for a few moments, on its journey west. He was alone, and had come, so he told her, for the sole purpose of spending the afternoon with her. With what joy she heard him, and how her heart beat fast as she walked with him under the shade of the great park trees at Heveril! He made her show him all the beauties of the old-fashioned garden, and the paddock, where two or three home-bred yearlings grazed, which were the pride of the Colonel's heart. Then the stables, and the coach-house, where stood the old coach of the Heverils, high swung on big leather springs, the body of it painted a dull yellow, with the arms of the family on its panels, with high, old-fashioned box-seat in front and a dicky for standing footman at the back, which had last been used when Marion's great-grandfather had driven in it to Washington for the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson.

MARION MANNING

Afterwards she led him into the house. It was over two hundred years old, and built of brick, which had grown brown and beautiful with the years. The central portion of it was two stories high, the façade being formed by six white pillars, which supported the pediment and roof, and stood on the tiled floor of the portico up to which a few steps led. Here the family sat in hot summer weather, protected by green and white awnings, which from a distance were effectual screens for rocking-chairs and tables, the latter now littered with books, magazines, papers, and Marion's fancy-work. The facings of all the windows and of the big front door were like the columns—white. On either side of the main part of the house two low wings crept out modestly, covering their low proportions by a tangled web of creepers and roses. The servants and work-people, all negroes, lived in the "quarters," or low, white, wooden buildings at the back of the manor-house.

Manning followed Marion through the narrow hall, which ran across the middle of the house, into the great library on the right, with its oak-panelled walls, and high bookcases, and its polished parquet floor. It was their living-room, and very often their dining-room as well, for the family loved it better than the formal, stiffly furnished sitting-rooms on the other side of the hall, or the small, cheerless dining-room. When the house was full, therefore, and a larger table must be provided for the numerous guests; or when Marion and her father alone, on cold winter evenings, sought the proximity of the great fireplace; or on summer days preferred to sit by the low, open window overlooking the green lawns and the flowing river at their feet—then the library was converted into a dining-hall, and portrayed grandparents from the walls looked down approvingly on the festive scenes, or on the quiet home group of father and daughter.

MARION MANNING

While Manning and the girl sat at tea together, the master of the house came in. He was a tall, thin man, with gray hair, mustache, and small goatee, who wore a brown corduroy coat, riding trousers and leggings, and carried in his left hand a soft, felt hat and a riding-whip. Manning rose as Marion mentioned her father's name, and the old gentleman came forward and shook hands warmly with his guest.

"Welcome to Heveril Manor," he exclaimed. "We have heard much of you from the world outside, and I am proud to offer you the hospitality of my home. My daughter, I perceive, has offered you tea; but will you not join with me in drinking a mint-julip?" Manning, following the custom of the place, accepted readily, and, in answer to a ring, the old butler, a sometime slave, whose people before him had been in the family of the Heverils for more than a hundred years, appeared, and bowing low, listened deferentially to his master's order. When he disappeared, conversation was resumed and divers topics of interest discussed. But when Manning broached the subject of politics, his host assumed the part of a polite listener, and said little on that topic, so absorbing to the younger man. Marion's cheeks, however, were flushed and excited, and she asked questions with curiosity and eagerness, as if to atone for her father's lack of interest. The afternoon wore quickly away, and all too soon for the excited girl the time came for him to leave; but when the Colonel courteously asked him to spend a few days with them a fortnight hence, he accepted with alacrity.

Two weeks went by, and by that time Manning had made up his mind. Once made up, no power on earth could shake it, and the determination to make Marion his wife, for the moment was of greater importance to him than anything else. The thought that her father might demur, that she herself might be un-

MARION MANNING

willing, never once flitted across his brain. His will, his decision alone, were necessary, and as for his future life, he now deemed Marion an essential feature; the moment had come to put the project into execution. He was not in love with her, but she attracted him strongly, and there was that in her which touched a chord in him never reached by others.

"This child will keep me straight," he thought, as, Sunday morning in church, he watched her kneeling figure, and to his own surprise, and for the first time since he was a little boy, felt his eyes grow moist. But he smiled when Marion instinctively glanced towards him as she rose from her knees. He left the next morning early, however, without saying anything to her. Only he had a long talk with her father, at the end of which the old man had said, in a sad voice :

"It is all in her hands; if she loves you, and could find her greatest happiness with you, I shall not object. She is all I have on earth, but I will give her up if it is her wish. Only, don't expect me to be glad, because, though you may be a big man for your years, you are not worthy of her—no man is," and he had left the room without another word.

"I shall be back in a few days," John had said to her as they were standing a little apart from the others on the steps before the house, at the foot of which the carriage was waiting, "and shall come to see you, if I may?" She looked her assent with happy eyes. "I have some work to do in Washington, but when that is over I shall return. Please be glad to see me when I come," he had added, in a lower voice, as he moved towards the rest of the party.

So it came to pass that on the following Thursday John Manning returned to Heveril to ask Marion to be his wife. She was not in the house when he arrived, and he walked into the garden to find her.

MARION MANNING

It was at the far end of it, at a spot where cultivation becomes wildness and the garden changes into wood, that he found her at last, standing motionless, watching him approach with expectant, eager eyes. In her unconscious pride of slender girlhood she seemed to him then the living embodiment of vernal nature, the child of spring, a human expression of joy and of youth. He moved slowly towards her, realizing with keen pleasure and in one comprehensive glance all the details of the picture before him: the background of woods in their full glory of fresh, new green; the magnolia trees, with dark, glossy leaf and lustrous, heavy-scented flower; the white dogwood; the climbing, creeping, graceful jasmine; the carpet of emerald grass, the pink crocuses shooting forth in luxuriant confusion and elbowing in the sunlight the multicolored tulips which bordered the path; and, more beautiful than these, the slim, straight, young figure in white, with its gray-blue eyes. His look was critical, but her beauty defied criticism, and he could not but be satisfied. He did not hurry, however, for the æsthetic sense in him revolted against the inroad of words and emotions which would mar the perfection of that scene. Even nature stood entranced, for it seemed as if the birds had hushed their carol, the insects their droning, and the leaves their rustling, to wait in breathless silence for the drama to unfold itself. She did not move as she noted his expression, but the color faded in her face and her smile died away. Then he was close beside her, and took her two unresisting hands in his, and she knew that what she had waited for and longed for had come, that earth was dwindling before her eyes, and that heaven seemed near.

"Marion," he said, "I want to tell you something. Will you listen to me now?" He looked at her closely. Her head was low and she did not lift her eyes.

MARION MANNING

"Marion," he continued, and his voice trembled, "will you be my wife?" The color came back to her suddenly as he said these words, and flooded her face. She lifted her eyes, which were shining with an unwonted light, to his, and in them he read her answer. He bent down quickly, "My darling," he whispered, and held her to him in a close embrace. "Do you know what I am asking of you? All, everything. Your beauty, your charm, your goodness. You must give them all to me. You must trust yourself in my hands. Would you be afraid? Do you think that I could make you happy?"

"Happy?" she answered, with a half sob. "Happy with you? Oh, why do you ask? Haven't you seen it; didn't you know? I couldn't hide it; I thought of you all the time, and when you came, when I was with you, I was so happy that I was almost afraid. Is it wrong to be too happy?—because—" her voice broke, and she hid her face against his shoulder.

"My little girl, it is quite right to be happy," he said. "Get all the happiness you want out of life, and keep it—while you can," he added, in a lower voice, and, with his arm round her waist, led her through the sweet-scented woods to a rustic bench under a spreading sycamore-tree.

"I never thought of marrying till I saw you," he said; "it had all been ambition with me before. Now, it's something different!" A smile crossed her face.

"It's like a wonderful story come true," she said, "that you, who have seen so much of the world, should yet care for me. You, who have done so many great things." Her voice trembled.

"Marion," he said, "tell me that you love me; I want you to care for me, more than all the rest of the world. Will you try to?" She moved from him a

MARION MANNING

little and turned her eyes away, speaking in halting, tremulous accents.

"I don't need to try. I care for you already; more than all the world. I don't want anything else but you. I have loved you from the first time I saw you; I shall never change. I don't change; ask them if I do. But—I never dared hope; it seemed too great a joy that you should care for me, you—you!" hesitatingly. "You do care, don't you?"

"Care?" he replied, and with his hands he turned her face to him. "My little sweetheart, my beautiful Marion, of course I do. I love you very dearly. I want you to be my wife, and I will try to make you happy. Dearest, I care for you very much!"

"Say better than all the world," she cried, springing up and standing before him with an eager, lovely look.

"Better than all the world," he repeated, slowly, a little haltingly. She threw herself into his arms. "Oh, John, I am too happy to live."

So the first chapter of her life ended.

Events succeeded each other quickly, and six weeks later or thereabouts the marriage took place. The evening before the wedding John and Marion walked once more in the old garden and by the rapid, noiseless river when the pall of coming night had quieted the rushing waters, and when nature was gently hushing herself to sleep. They walked for a long time in silence, till at last she stopped and turned to him.

"John, do you realize how serious it is?" she said, lifting her grave, troubled eyes to his. "Think of it; it is for years and years, you know; for always and always. You must never tire of me, John; you must always care for me, as you do now, no matter where we are. I don't mind leaving home, if I go with you, and wherever you take me I shall be happy, if only you

MARION MANNING

don't stop caring. You won't, John, will you?" she pleaded, putting both her hands on his arm.

"My little Marion," he said, "I won't stop, I promise you; but it will be hard for you to leave your father and your old home to begin a new life. Please God, you will be happy!"

"John, I am not afraid," she said, very simply. "I love you so much, so much, that at times I am dizzy with the thought of the happiness that is coming to me. You are so good to me that I feel as if all the rest of my life was not long enough in which to thank you. But I shall try to show you how grateful I am."

"Marion," he exclaimed, bending to kiss the sweet face so near to him, "you must not think too well of me. I have not always led a good life; I have lived in the world; I have acted as other men do. You must not idealize me, child. I am selfish and not worthy of your admiration. You are so much better than I that you must lift me up to you. And you can do it, because you are sweeter and nobler than most women." He hesitated, and continued, "and because we love each other so much."

"Only promise me one thing, John," Marion said at length, after a silence. "That you will never keep anything from me; that if you are unhappy you will let me know; that you will never deceive me; that you will always tell me the truth, even if it hurts me—promise, John!"

"I promise," he answered, without a moment's hesitation. They turned towards home, and once again she made him tell her how he loved her, and she treasured his words deeply in her heart. Once she said, suddenly:

"You have never spoken to me about Mrs. Walford. Tell me about her. She is a great friend of yours, isn't she?"

MARION MANNING

"Oh yes; she is a friend of mine," rejoined Manning, shortly. "But what is there to tell about her? She lives in Washington. She is clever. I have known her for years. She has gone to Europe now."

"Gone?" echoed Marion, in surprise. "I thought she was coming here to-morrow. You did not tell me she had left! Do you know," she continued, "I was jealous of her when we first met? I thought she cared for you, that you cared for her."

"Cared?" he cried, with rather a strained laugh. "She is very nice, but I could never care for her. You need not be jealous; she has never even attracted me in that way." Marion laughed aloud with pure happiness, and then as they reached the house and stood for a moment at the foot of the steps, in the darkness which, by that time, had wrapped the land in a mantle of obscurity, looking up through the open door into the brightness within, she said, very low :

"To-morrow, life begins!"

III

*"And there is even a happiness
That makes the heart afraid."*

—HOOD.

THE first few months after her marriage passed rapidly for Marion Manning, for all her girlish imaginings had merged into a reality which satisfied every craving of her heart and mind. John was not only kind and considerate, but he devoted himself to the task of binding her closer to him by every means that lay within his power. He consulted her wishes in all the details of daily life, studied to give her those pleasures which she most enjoyed, and succeeded in hiding from her those particular parts of his nature which could not fail to give her pain. His logical mind having enabled him to see what requirements she would exact of him, and what failings she would easiest excuse, he was able to realize to her entire satisfaction the expectations she had centred on him. But, while he endeavored to please her and to satisfy her, he was busy with more dominant desires and motives. His strong will and mind, which had controlled the workings of his destiny up to the time of his marriage, caused him to determine that the rest of his life should be thought out, planned, and carried to as successful an issue as the beginning. His wife, he decreed, must be part of that destiny as inevitably as himself, and he worked to make his ways her ways as well as his will her will. The selfishness in him which dictated

MARION MANNING

his course of action was unperceived by Marion; but even had she been aware of it, she would in no wise have suffered from the knowledge of it, or thought less of him for the possession of that fault. Her nature was of the kind that revels in self-sacrifice when the object of it holds a large share of her affections, and she would have deemed it only just to subordinate her will and wishes to his, even if he had not exacted their surrender.

Her character was the very opposite of that of the man she had married. She was imaginative, poetical, idealistic. Intuitive knowledge and perception made her a warm partisan and an impulsive enthusiast. Her nature was fervently religious and reverent. As Mrs. Caring had said of her: "She must worship what she cares for—causes, deeds, or men." And though her faith and her knowledge were often illogical, they were none the less considered by her articles of belief. The principles which had been instilled into her at an early stage of her childish life had fixed themselves indelibly on her mind, and a rigid sense of right and wrong often made her intolerant, where her feeling did not blind her, of the deficiencies and the falls and frailties of humanity. She was narrow-minded, but not egotistical; hot-tempered also, but not unforgiving. But then she had never really been tried on that score, so that it is hard to foretell a quality which has had no opportunity to show itself. John easily read these signs of character in her, and at first was not a little disturbed to find that while she was able to find no fault in him, she was not blind to those of others. But he reassured himself with the idea that he could always keep her love and her good opinion.

Meanwhile Marion became the unconscious slave of her husband, treading the paths which his influence made her choose, and doing the things which his wishes,

MARION MANNING

all unknown to her, had made her desire to do. And she was happy beyond the dreams of poets. The joy in her face attracted even outsiders, and Mrs. Caring, when she first saw her three months after the wedding, doubted her own prophetic powers.

"Whatever may come later," she said to a friend, "it will have been worth living for to have felt what she feels now. 'Come what come may, she will have had her day,' " she misquoted, "and some of us never have had our day. Ah! well, this world is a strange place; but if you have sufficient curiosity in your own and other people's fate, it will interest you to the end. Don't you agree with me?" Her auditor smiled, but refused to express her views on life to the very sceptical, rather frivolous woman beside her.

This was said at a sea-side watering-place, whither John Manning had brought his bride a week before to learn the delights of sea-bathing and sailing, and to meet a large number of Northern society people, some of them friends of his. She was thus to be initiated into the manners and customs of a place very different from any that she had known heretofore. Marion had great natural dignity, however, and as a beautiful woman and the wife of a man much talked of, though attracting notice, she nevertheless disarmed criticism and evoked approbation. Her husband was pleased by the admiration she excited, and made her spend, what seemed to her, a lavish sum of money on her clothes. "You can afford it," he said to her, "and, as my wife, you should not mind the expense." This last point was conclusive to her, as John knew it would be, and from that time on she gave great thought to her wardrobe. They went out in society a great deal, to luncheon-parties and dinners, on picnics and sailing expeditions, and the object was accomplished at which John had aimed. He had determined that his wife

MARION MANNING

should do him credit in the social world, and for that reason had taken her for a month to Garton. But in some ways she learned less than she might, because her observation was not well trained, and she was too much of a dreamer to take the details of social life with all the seriousness which they demanded. She could not but be flattered, however, and pleased by the warm welcome accorded her, but she felt herself a stranger in the world of fashion, and did not understand its ways of action and of thought. There was much more glitter and show than in Virginia, and she wondered whether it hid greater possessions and greater worth, or whether appearances did not count here for more than reality. The conventionality of the life struck her forcibly, and the colder and more indifferent manner of the women.

"You are very different from us Southern women," she said to an attractive girl, who had come to talk to her one evening, after a long, formal dinner-party, the same at which Mrs. Caring had commented on her radiant look of happiness.

"You are so much colder than we, and so much more reserved. To an outsider like me, it seems almost as if you were afraid of showing your feelings."

"Oh, you are right," Molly Hart answered. "We are afraid, at least most of us are. It seems to us much better not to let people see that we care, when we do, than to let our feelings be the public property of the rest of the world. But you mustn't imagine that we don't feel as much as you, even if we don't show it." Her bright, vivacious eyes were all eagerness, and expression lent beauty to a face which would otherwise have been plain.

"But I think that you are different from the others," Marion replied. "The first time I saw you, I hoped very much that we might be friends, because I instinc-

MARION MANNING

tively felt that I could talk to you as I couldn't to most of the people I have met. Perhaps there is a sympathetic link between us. We may have met in our last incarnation," she continued, smiling. "Are you like me? Do you judge people from first impressions? It's a mistake, probably, but I can't help it, and I must say that, so far, I have never been disappointed or mistaken in any one whom I thought well of at first sight!"

"Mrs. Manning, beware!" a masculine voice cried, and Marion smiled as she turned to recognize a college friend of John's, who was interrupting her. "Don't tempt Providence," he went on, seating himself next to Miss Hart on the sofa. "But," he hesitated, "perhaps, on the whole, it would be just as well to thank your lucky stars that you can talk as you did. Not many people can."

"Oh, I am fortunate. I do not pretend that I am not," she said, while a soft, dreamy light crept into her eyes, and she looked across the room to where John stood by the open window. Molly noticed the young wife's glance, and a swift shadow crept over her face for half a moment; then it was gone! She turned with laughing eyes to a youth, and rose to follow him into the next room. Houghton moved nearer Marion.

"How attractive she is!" exclaimed the latter, as their eyes followed the retreating girl. Houghton responded eagerly, and with a pleased appreciation of her enthusiasm. "She is not pretty," she continued, "but her expression has so much charm in it that you forget everything else. I always think that expression is the only thing that gives real charm to a face, and that looks don't really matter as much as people think—it is just like atmosphere, isn't it? Have you often noticed how sometimes atmosphere makes a stretch of dunes, or a marsh, seem much more beautiful than

MARION MANNING

what is called really beautiful scenery? Don't you think so?"

"I do," he answered; "but do you know why it is? It's because perfect beauty is too distant, and not human enough for us to understand. One can't love a statue though one can admire it, and it's the same thing with snow mountains; they give one a feeling of awe, but don't touch us. There must be something besides beauty to make us care—weakness, variableness, sweetness, whatever it is, something human that is not beyond our grasp or power of comprehension, something that flits across a face giving it light and feeling. Isn't that it?"

"Oh yes; you are right," Marion replied, "and you said just what I have always thought. I think that's one reason, too, why children appeal to one so strongly, and why one can't resist them! I *never* can, and they know it. They feel that I am in their power, and that they can make me do whatever they will. This afternoon," she leaned forward, her eyes dancing, "on the beach there were two of them there, two little boys, no other grown-up people about, except their nurses, so I played with them, and we made sand-houses, and rivers of salt water, and we hid in the rocks, and they pulled my hair down. You mustn't tell," she went on, smiling, "because all these people here would laugh at me and think me quite childish. But it was great fun, all the same, and no one saw." She looked not much more than a child herself as a mischievous expression crossed her face.

"Tell me," she continued, her expression changing to one of more serious interest, "you were at college with my husband, weren't you? Had you ever known him before?"

"No," Aleck Houghton answered; "but we were room-mates for two years, and got to know each other

MARION MANNING

very well. One does, you know, living with a person, and then I had admired him before I knew him. John's a very clever man, Mrs. Manning!" She smiled—how well she knew it; but how pleased she was to hear it said! and she immediately enrolled him on the list of those people whom she liked.

A few minutes later they were in the hall, and Houghton was helping her with her cloak.

"It almost frightens one to look at her," he whispered a moment later to Mrs. Caring. "You feel as if the world had been too kind to her, and that you feared its revenge. She has every most coveted gift: beauty, intelligence, money, happiness, nothing whatever to wish for, nothing to change."

"You talk as if you were jealous," Mrs. Caring rejoined.

"I am; I should like some of her blessings. It isn't a fair division, you must admit," and then he stepped forward to say good-night to Mrs. Manning.

When Marion and John were in the carriage and had driven off, she said to him:

"John, I didn't know that Mr. Houghton had been a room-mate of yours in college. How nice he is; he must be a great friend of yours."

"Oh, he is a good fellow, nothing extraordinary," was the answer; "but he has a knack of always pleasing women."

"Isn't he a favorite with men, too?" Marion asked, astonished.

"Well, he's not exactly what you call a man's man, and I only consider him a friend because of college associations; but I don't think that I should ever care to have you see too much of him." She said nothing, but thought of the kind, open face of the man whom they were discussing, and wondered why John was trying to prejudice her against him. A thought flit-

MARION MANNING

ted across her mind, and impulsively she gave vent to it.

"Anyway, I am sure that children and animals would like him. He has that kind of face." She regretted her words the moment after she had spoken them, as her husband flushed with annoyance, but did not answer. A few moments later, and to change the current of her thoughts, he pointed to the moonlit sea before them.

"Can't we walk home by the beach?" his wife cried, dismissing Houghton from her mind, and John, nothing loath, stopped the carriage, and they walked from the road to the sands below them.

The moon was at her full, but low, and flooded the beach with an opalescent, glimmering color, touching the crest of the little rippling waves with silver edging, and making a broad path of trembling white shimmer over the sea to the low horizon, faintly discernible in the far distance. The tall and jagged rocks, which at times obstructed the long sweep of beach, stood boldly outlined against their own black shadows, and the trees that lined the road, running parallel to the water a hundred yards back, were indistinct gray splatches against a misty background. The silence was only broken by the lapping of the waves and the distant tread of horses' feet. Marion stood still in breathless wonder, drinking in to her soul's depths the ecstasy of the hour, the enthralling powers of beauty surrounding her, the magic charm of the instant made eternity. She forgot the man who was beside her; she only saw herself a mere speck in the immensity of the universe. The lamps of heaven were as myriad peeping eyes, that saw through her and beyond her from the haze of endless space; the sea was the mighty force of supernatural divine power; the trees, the rocks, the sandy beach, the setting to this picture of pure,

MARION MANNING

unveiled reality. All the world was a dream ; this only was truth ; here only were the secrets of time revealed, and the true knowledge of right and wrong. The path of silver light before her seemed the easy, beautiful road to the gates of heaven, and in the brightness of its reflection the darker waters on each side faded before her gaze. With face uplifted and rapt eyes, with loose, flowing folds of soft, shimmery stuffs enfolding her, she looked the incarnation of the Spirit of Night, ensorcelled by the spell she herself had cast about her.

But Manning's eyes were not on her. He was moodily watching the onward, never-hurrying, but resistless waves with knitted brow and a staring look. Memories crowded in on him, and, like her who stood so near him, he lost himself in their encircling hold, forgot the present, and dreamed of what was not. Suddenly she roused herself and her eyes fell on him. Moving very close to him, and in silence, she put her arm through his arm and her hand into his. He started, looked at her with surprise, then exclaimed :

"We have forgotten our walk ; come, it's getting very late." But before he had time to stop her she had bent her head and kissed the hand she held.

"Marion, what are you doing?" he cried, and drew her up, putting one arm round her.

"I owe you all I have," she said, with low, thrilling voice. "I thank you for the joy you have given me."

"Child, child!" he murmured, and then stooped down and kissed her.

IV

*"Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar."*

—WORDSWORTH.

IN October, John Manning and his wife went to his native town in New Hampshire, where they were to spend the winter. New Bristol was a thriving seaport of some thirty thousand inhabitants, and one of the commercial and political centres of the State. Unlike other cities, however, where mercantile success stamps its new, hideous mark, in its residential quarters, its streets still had the quaint, old, sleepy look of a century ago. Its broad avenues were shaded by rows of stately elms; its white or buff-colored wooden houses, green-shuttered, with covered porches over the front door, or pillared verandas, were set back from the road in the middle of velvety-green lawns, which were enclosed by white rail fences, or neatly trimmed square hedges of box or of privet. Flower-beds filled with geraniums, petunias, asters, and other bright-colored autumn flowers, bordered some of the straight paths leading from the houses to the street, or surrounded the cottages with a belt of effulgent color. Many of these New England dwellings were large and massively built, others small and unpretending; but most of them were old and scrupulously clean, conveying to every beholder the impression of order and propriety.

On their way from the station they passed through the business part of the town, and, after the cobble-

MARION MANNING

stone-paved streets, traversed and intersected by clanging trolley-cars, these old streets and avenues, with their quiet shade, and the composed temper of their inhabitants, came on Marion with a soothing sense of peace. It was all very different from anything that she had ever known before; but her mind was on the alert for new impressions, and she welcomed them gladly. And, besides, everything about her husband's home was sacred to her.

John Manning's parents had been dead many years, and his only living relation was a maiden cousin of middle age. It was to her that he had written a few weeks before, announcing his arrival, requesting her at the same time to choose him a nice house. This she had done promptly, and it was to this new home which she had selected for them that they were now driving. When at last they arrived before it they surveyed their house with very critical eyes. It did not materially differ from the others, except in size, perhaps; but then, in consequence, the grass-plot was a trifle smaller. They walked up the gravel path to the front door, on which was a large brass knocker brilliantly burnished, and before which stood Miss Electa Manning. She was a thin woman, of austere appearance, with sparse, gray hair pulled tightly back from a high forehead and knotted firmly at the back of her head. She wore a plain dress of stiff black silk, and at the end of a long ribbon, which hung from her waist, was a large pair of scissors.

"Welcome, Cousin John, and Cousin Marion," she said, in a high-pitched and rasping voice, as she gave each a little peck on the cheek before leading them into the front parlor.

"Be seated," she continued, and Marion, feeling as if she were at a play, but like an automaton following her husband's lead, sat down; and they all three con-

MARION MANNING

fronted one another from three very straight-backed chairs.

"I have done the best I could," Miss Electa continued, "and I trust you will be satisfied, though the Lord alone knows what folks really want. This house is the property of Mr. Amos Dunfield, and the rent is \$1500 a year. The situation is desirable for you, Cousin John, if you are thinking of embarking in business, as the trolley-cars are only two blocks off; and the house itself is most elegant, though a trifle grand for my taste; but I have a humble mind, as the Lord knows," and she half-bowed her head, as if the Lord were standing before her. Then, resuming her brisk tones: "Cousin Marion, there are twelve rooms in the house—this parlor and a back parlor, and a room for Cousin John to do his business in on the other side of the hall, and a dining-room back of that, and a pantry and a kitchen farther back still, and a laundry in the cellar, and a bedroom for you up-stairs, and one for Cousin John back of it, and two others for your friends, and then servants' rooms—Mercy on us, who's that?" she cried, interrupting herself to spring from her chair and to run to the hall, there to confront Marion's old negro nurse, Aunt Liza. Liza was short and fat, with a black face and hair of the crinkliest wool that had ever decked an African's head. She was dressed in dark clothes; but her bonnet would have attracted notice anywhere. It was tall and large and fastened round her neck by broad crimson ribbons, and it bobbed when she moved, so that the sight of her courtesying figure and of her radiant black face before Miss Manning's astonished and dismayed expression sent Marion into suppressed peals of laughter.

"Cousin Electa," she said, controlling herself, "this is my old nurse, Aunt Liza. She has been with me ever since I was born, and is my oldest friend!"

MARION MANNING

"Law, Miss Marion," cried the colored woman, taking Marion's hands and bending over them, "you're right—Liza is your oldest and best friend, and while she's around you needn't fear nothing. Why, dearie, if this here cousin of Massa Manning's is your friend, then Aunt Liza is hers, too. Yes, miss! yes, miss!" and she smiled again and courtesied.

"Dear me, dear me," Miss Electa ejaculated, aghast, "I am sure I am very pleased to meet you! But gracious goodness, gracious goodness," she continued, as she returned to her chair, shaking her head from one side to the other, "does that woman touch you when you dress, Cousin Marion? I've seen a lot of negroes, but I never could abide them near me, though, as the Lord knows, we are all equal before Him." Here John interposed, having regained his composure.

"It's very good of you, Cousin Electa, to have taken so much trouble about the house, and I am sure that we shall like it very much. You will have to help Marion about her housekeeping, as she has never done any in the North, and everything here will be new and strange to her."

"I am sure, Cousin John, that I shall be most happy to assist your wife in every way, whenever she desires to call upon me." And the stiff-featured but kind-hearted maiden lady relented a little from the formality of her manner and smiled at her new cousin.

It did not take Marion long to view the whole of her new domain, which, while very different from her Southern home, was yet sufficiently well built and pleasant to look at, to give promise of comfort and even beauty. The old mahogany furniture in it was good, the hangings were of chintz, antiquated but not unpleasant—and the polished wooden floors recalled those that had been the pride of Uncle Isaac at Heveril. Before long, flowers, photographs, and books made it

MARION MANNING

seem less austere, and the presence of unusual charm and of vivid personalities soon brought it that subtle atmosphere of attraction which the least cultivated among us is bound to recognize and to realize. New Bristol recognized it slowly; but in the end admitted it very openly, and as for Miss Electa, she loved the house and its inmates from the first day that they set foot in it. Life in this New England town was a totally new experience for a Southern girl. The people here were methodical, precise, severe in their criticisms—in many ways behind the age, provincial and narrow-minded, but with it all intellectual and literary beyond their equals in other places. New Bristol society was made up of classes and of clubs. There was the Browning Club, composed of the most serious-minded women in New Bristol, who met twice a week to dissect the poet's thoughts; the Greek Drama Club, where the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus were studied; there was a philosophy class, an art class—Bible lectures and discussions, mothers' meetings, and Women's Auxiliaries connected with church work, others besides, too long a list to recount. All these the elect aspired to. Marion, being uninitiated, and therefore not elect, made no feint of proposing herself a member to all or any of these groups. She had, therefore, to be urged—and, contrary to her desire, but upon the advice of her husband, accepted the invitation of the Greek Students and of the Women's Auxiliary. Miss Electa belonged to both, and was not a little proud to introduce her fair young cousin to these select assemblages. While the women in such wise occupied their leisure time, the men were all engaged in business or in politics. In the evenings only they intermingled with the other sex—at small dinner-parties, or when, in holiday time, the Odd Fellows' Hall was turned into a ball-room or concert-room, young and old

MARION MANNING

forgot serious thoughts in frivolous amusement. And beneath it all lay the sound foundation of high principles, of straight morals, and of genuine goodness of heart.

Into such a society the Mannings now found themselves thrown, and they followed its duties or recreations so far as each thought advisable or diverting. Privately, John laughed at the provincialism of their surroundings; but Marion, through her rose-colored spectacles, was inclined to view the foibles and eccentricities of her neighbors with great leniency.

But, all the same, they made their own life and lived it. John had great capacities for work, and he did not spare himself in New Bristol. He rose very early and worked from eight till twelve, and in the afternoon for two or three hours more; in the evening he read until very late. When they were alone he would read aloud to his wife; otherwise would shut himself up in his library and devour books with extraordinary rapidity. His work was literary, journalistic — his reading historical or philosophical. Between times he conversed with the political leaders, and studied hard to discover the innermost secrets of their trade, and there lay his deepest interest.

The only exercises he indulged in were riding or walking, and he walked oftener than he rode, for he had said once that he could think better when he was on foot than on horseback. Marion and he very often took long drives together, and sometimes while they were out hardly exchanged more than a few words. She, being a dreamer, had great capabilities of silence, and was perfectly content to sit by his side and to fill her soul with the joy of living and of nearness to him; while he plotted for fame, schemed new work, and dissected in his own mind the broad field of human nature, which was to be his battle-field. Then, before they

MARION MANNING

reached home, he would turn to her and smile; beguile her with caressing and soft words, and throw the whole force of his personality into the endeavor to charm her. Such was his power of concentration and his personal charm.

Of her life, much need not be said—it was passed at his side, and at the risk of repetition, I can only write that she was blissfully happy. She did not really understand her husband, but she loved him with a blind idolatry which asks no disturbing questions. She recognized the brilliancy of his intellect; she was grateful for his love and his consideration. Even though once or twice he astonished her by acting in a way which she did not understand, she never analyzed his motives, for that part of her character, where those whom she loved were concerned, lay still dormant within her.

Two days after their arrival in New Bristol something happened which for a time troubled her. She was sitting in the front parlor, reading by the open window, when her eyes, straying from her book, were arrested by the sight of a large black cat that stood in the middle of the room. She had an inherent dislike of the feline species, and jumped to her feet with an exclamation of annoyance. John, sitting at a writing-table by the opposite wall, turned round in his chair, and noticing the cause of her dismay, and, perhaps, irritated himself by the interruption of his work, rose and deliberately kicked the cat out of the open side-window. Marion screamed aloud, and the cat, only very narrowly saved from deadly injury, escaped round the house.

"John, how could you—how could you?" Marion cried. "You must have killed it. Oh! it was cruel!"

"Cruel?" he answered, coldly. "As you are responsible for my action, I should not call it cruel! Your

MARION MANNING

frightened face was enough to make any one throw it out of the window. You need not worry about him; cats have nine lives," and he resumed his writing. But in a few moments Marion furtively left the sitting-room and went to the kitchen, to seek news of the maltreated animal; there, to her intense relief, to find it lapping a bowl of milk in the corner. But her day's pleasure had been destroyed, and it was not until the late afternoon that John, exerting his fascination to the utmost, made her forget what was, after all, only a trifle.

Cousin Electa was a frequent visitor at the house, and a constant source of curiosity and amusement to her new cousin. Up to this time the spinster lady's life had been very uniform and quite immutable. She had been born in New Bristol; she had lived there ever since; it was her centre, the sphere of her activities and interest, her world and its horizon. Outside events touched her but as they affected New Bristol, while, on the other hand, municipal or social events in her native town grew gigantic to her. As most of her neighbors thought exactly as she did, she might have carried her beliefs and opinions to the grave had not John and Marion come upon the scene in the nick of time, when a dissension in the Browning Club had disquieted her not a little and upset her usual equanimity. She had, therefore, turned with joy to the delightful element of novelty which they introduced into her social circle, not dreaming that their coming would alter the monotony of her life, and even dethrone some of her dearest fetishes.

Meanwhile Marion found much pleasure in her society—first, because of her relationship to her husband; and, secondly, for her diverting and quaint ways. Now and then, however, Miss Electa's rigid and uncompromising ideas irritated her, and only a keen sense of

MARION MANNING

humor saved many situations which otherwise might have resulted in friction between the two. Miss Manning was fussy and decidedly old maidish in her habits, and the careless confusion which surrounded Marion very often displeased her seriously. She took it upon herself to lecture the young wife upon the necessity of "God-like" order, and descanted upon the evils which would be the result of its neglect. The latter's carelessness of time, and of punctuality also, troubled her a great deal, and she told her that such a fault could only be overcome by prayer and meditation.

"And, my dear, as the Lord knows, it is only by prayer that I have ever won His grace or pardon." Miss Manning said "as the Lord knows" periodical-ly every time she opened her lips, and at first this constant reference to her Maker was disconcerting to her listeners; but time gradually overcame their prejudices and accustomed them to her peculiarities. There was one trick she possessed, however, which Marion never got used to, and always watched with alarm. It was the habit of opening and of shutting vehemently, whenever she got excited in the slightest degree, the pair of scissors which hung from her waist. The sight of Liza always set the scissors in motion, and Marion not infrequently was the unconscious cause of their flexibility. Once John was obliged to make a remark upon the subject, offending his cousin most deeply by so doing, but his words produced a certain effect, and for some little time the scissors were quieter.

It was one day when they were standing in the parlor waiting for Marion to go into the dining-room for lunch. Five minutes passed—Miss Electa watching intently every motion of the clock—then her hand strayed to her waist. Seven minutes passed.

"Those eggs will be ruined, Cousin John!" she

MARION MANNING

exclaimed, opening the scissors. Ten minutes elapsed. "The cook won't stay if such going on keep up!" she cried, the scissors meanwhile working incessantly. John smiled.

"Marion will be down soon!" But five more minutes went by before she appeared, and Cousin Electa had grown quite desperate.

"Cousin John, if you don't train your young wife into better ways than these, I shudder to think of your future!"

"Electa, if you don't stop brandishing those scissors before my eyes, I shall have to leave the room. Heavens alive, woman, do you see what you are doing? You'll cut some one up one day!"

Miss Manning's face dropped, and her eyes fell to her hands. She blushed violently.

"Cousin John," she stammered. But Marion, who had meanwhile entered unobserved and had taken in the details of the scene, linked her arm into that of Miss Electa, and led her quietly into the dining-room, talking incessantly until the poor lady had regained her composure, and peace was restored.

V

*"The ruling passion, be it what it will,
The ruling passion conquers reason still."*

—POPE.

BEFORE going further, and in order to explain much that happened later, the state of politics in the town of New Bristol at the time when the events just related were taking place must be made clear.

The thinking and active men of the city were divided into two, or rather three, parties—the Republican, the Democratic, and the Republican Union, which last was a party within a party. For years the Democrats had been out of office, forming a minority in the councils of the city too small to be of any weight. The Republican Union was a body within the Republican ranks, of independent, resolute, but perhaps somewhat impractical, men, whose ideal and object was good government, and who numbered on their roll-call some able lawyers and a number of highly honored citizens of age and prominent standing, many young and ardent reformers, and also some disaffected party men, whose merits had not been sufficiently appreciated, according to their own estimate, by the party leaders.

It was the Republicans who actually governed the town, and they did so by the power of an organization as simple in its results as it was intricate in its workings; and one man ruled the organization. This man was David S. Robbins, the editor of the Republican

MARION MANNING

organ, *The Morning Argus*. By his youth and his energy, by his executive ability, by a personal charm in him which attracted men, and, above all, by his great love of power, he had helped to perfect that system which he now controlled and governed with an authority which was in reality absolute, but also tactful and unobtrusive.

The town and its outlying provinces were divided into districts, and each was presided over by a tool of Robbins. These districts were again divided into smaller ones, over which lesser "machine" lights kept open eyes, and this net-work of political intrigue and detective work radiated and revolved round its originator and its chief. The political tendencies, and the every-day wants of each man in the county were known to Robbins and his lieutenants; the corporations and all the large mercantile houses were bound hand and foot to the organization, and the supremacy of it was impressed even upon the agricultural element outside of New Bristol. No one ever presented himself at the office of Robbins without obtaining an interview. Every one was listened to, advised, helped, or dismissed, as the case might be; high and low, all were treated alike, all received consideration from headquarters, and only the most astute realized that they were being used as tools rather than assisted as citizens; the others praised a system which, for the time being, was certainly beneficial to them. In municipal affairs, and as far away as in the capitol of the State, Robbins dispensed patronage, and, in return, the measures he advocated and the bills which he favored were acted upon and nearly always approved. To carry out this large scheme, funds, of course, were required, and contributions from companies and individuals had from the start kept the exchequer well furnished and the officials paid. To his credit, let it be said, that Rob-

MARION MANNING

bins did not misappropriate funds or amass a private fortune; but that he was unscrupulous in his ways and means of obtaining what he most wanted, which was influence and votes, cannot be denied.

To his followers he was a great and an admired leader; to his opponents a dishonorable, perfidious "boss"; to impartial observers merely a clever, sharp, and ambitious demagogue.

But the way to success lay undoubtedly in his hands, and, soon after his arrival in New Bristol, Manning began to devote himself both financially and politically to the task of enlisting on his side the good-will and the support of the man at the wheel.

One day, towards the latter part of December, Mr. Robbins lunched with the Mannings. He had met Marion once or twice before, but this was the first time that he had availed himself of her husband's oft-repeated invitations and had taken a meal with them. Of a type totally different from any gentleman she had ever met, from a class which up to now had been a closed book to her, the editor of the *Argus* could, by his own persuasion or personal charm, never have won from her any liking or kindly feeling; but to please her husband, and to further his interests, even a more antipathetic character might have won her sympathy; and so might he, had he not unconsciously placed himself beyond the pale of her indulgence by an action which had only that morning been disclosed to her. Consequently, every mannerism and word of the man who sat beside her at table irritated and displeased her. His compliments on her looks, his open flattery of her husband's ability and intellect, were interpreted by her as measures for obtaining an object and for currying favor with his hosts. But she hid her dislike, and with true Southern courtesy played the part which was required of her. Only when their guests had scattered

MARION MANNING

was she able to unmask and to reveal the true nature of her feelings. When her husband returned to the drawing-room, after a few last confidential words with the political leader in his own den, she laid her hands impetuously on his arm and began to talk in an excited way. She spoke so rapidly, so vehemently, and with so much incoherence that she defeated her own object, and only annoyed John by what he termed an illogical assault.

"My dear, what has Robbins done to you," he asked, crossly, "that you should be so severe on him? He seems to have offended you beyond all measure. What is the matter? Do be quiet about it, and don't get so excited. You lose all sense of proportion when you talk like that." The girl was silenced and turned her eyes from him, and the words she had meant to speak remained unsaid. An inherent dislike, however, of causing pain to any one with whom he came into constant contact, or rather of witnessing it, made Manning put his arm round her waist in a forgiving manner.

"Tell me what you have heard," he said, "but please smile again first, and say that you will forgive me for calling you to order."

"I saw Mr. Cartwright just before lunch this morning," Marion explained a few minutes later, when they were seated together on the large sofa in the library, "and he told me that Mr. Robbins wants to nominate Mr. Leffet for mayor, and that every one said that he was going to persuade you to work for him."

John smiled. "Well, and what else did Cartwright say?"

"He told me about Mr. Leffet," Marion answered, concisely.

John looked interested. "What did he tell you?"

She went on, with indignation :

MARION MANNING

"He told me that he is clever and very ambitious, but dishonest. He started a company to build a trolley-car road, or something of the sort, and lots of people—poor people, too—bought stock in it because he said that it was a good investment, and then—it failed. The poorer ones were ruined, but he is still a rich man, because, they say, that when the stocks were very high he sold out without saying anything about it, knowing what would happen. Every one doesn't know it, but they all suspect him, and—and Robbins wants you to help that man—and that's all!" Her voice shook with righteous anger and emotion. Manning was silent, scrutinizing his wife's face.

"But what if the story wasn't true?" he said. "What if he had lost with all the others, and that it was only his other investments that had averted ruin for him and saved his fortune—perhaps even augmented it? One story is quite as likely as the other."

"Oh, but, John, it isn't likely," his wife interposed, eagerly. "He is not nice in many ways. He is selfish, and cares only for his own interests; he wouldn't serve the people well. He is bribing men to vote for him now, and, what's more, he can be bought himself!"

"Who told you all this?" was the peremptory interruption.

"Mr. Cartwright!"

"Mr. Cartwright had a purpose, my dear," John said, shortly, "and played on your guilelessness. Leffet is an organization man; Cartwright and his friends, who are all members of the Republican Union, want to defeat him, and enroll me on their side. It's a deep-laid plan, my dear wife, and you were to be their tool. I see it all. You are too new to politics to understand them yet; but in time you will learn to distinguish truth from party fiction."

She looked troubled and pleaded with him:

MARION MANNING

"But, John, I don't think Mr. Cartwright would invent a story like that. He is not that kind of man. You can't help believing him when he talks to you; he is so earnest, so honest; he inspires you with confidence. I should sooner believe him than Mr. Robbins. Put the two side by side, and you couldn't help believing Mr. Cartwright first—could you?" There was a pause. "John!" Marion continued, fixing her serious and intense eyes on his, and leaning very close to him, "tell me, is it true or not? The story! You must tell me, and then it will make no difference what the others say, because I shall know!" He did not answer, and looked at her hesitatingly, doubtfully, opposite sentiments in him struggling for the mastery. The trustfulness in her eyes finally overcame him.

"Dear, I am not quite sure; I think Cartwright is wrong, but I shall find out. Yes, I promise you—you will believe me, won't you?" he urged, and her radiant smile fully repaid him for his truthful assertion.

But half an hour later, when he had left her in search of exercise and solitude, to walk through the town out into the silent country, his mind was in a ferment, and many conflicting emotions were at war within him. He had come to a crisis in his life which he must face, and good and evil fought for the victory. Good had triumphed unquestionably when he had answered his wife, and the generous feelings then aroused in him had filled him with unrest and a certain vague apprehension. Marion had well summed up the situation when she had said, "And they say that when the stocks were highest he sold out and said nothing about it," and "Every one doesn't know it, but they all suspect him." That was the gist of the whole matter. Everybody didn't know, but a large number of them had suspicions. Robbins, however, knew, and knew

MARION MANNING

that unless the story was checked, killed at the start, a campaign would be useless. Public sentiment would be too strong to combat. The organization would be defeated. Defeat could not be faced, and Leffet must be nominated, he decreed. To effect that, he must be defended ably and be well supported. The story of the trolley-car-company transaction must be refuted and the public mind cleared of its suspicion. Only one man connected with the organization could accomplish that feat, and that was John Manning! Although a party man by the deeds which had given him reputation, he had become an idol in New Bristol. His integrity was considered above question; his principles were approved; he was respected, admired, looked up to. The local leaders realized this fully, and with quick perception Robbins, reading in the young man's character a certain moral weakness not observed by others, had broached the proposition to him which was now perplexing his mind and disturbing it. Manning had replied truthfully to Marion when he had told her that "he wasn't sure, that he did not know." He did not know really, but he suspected the truth more than strongly, and the proposal that he should disprove the accusation and clear the man from the public stigma of too great business shrewdness, and of dishonor, was one that was not easy for him to undertake. Leffet, he felt, was not the man upon whom the responsibility of mayorship should rest; he was not a man who could be trusted or whom one could confide a trust to. But, except for the trolley-car scandal, there was nothing palpable to be said against him. To all appearances, and so far as was known, his life had been practically blameless; no real, tangible fault could be alleged against his private character. His enemies' only weapons of assault, therefore, were suspicions, and from those suspicions John Manning could clear him, if he would,

MARION MANNING

and reinstate him in the eyes of his fellow-citizens. If he would—that was the point on which the entire issue hinged! One able speech made in Leffet's favor would assure his nomination and his election, and that speech Robbins entreated and urged John to make. His arguments had seemed plausible enough an hour ago, his reasons very convincing, his request but a simple one. He had asked it as a favor—as a favor to the Republican party, whom Manning would thus lay under deep obligations to him. The man was innocent, the leader had continued; unwarrantable scruples of conscience only could restrain one from pleading Leffet's cause, and those scruples should be overcome. If the principles of the Republican party were the principles Manning advocated, then he must trust that party to nominate the right man, and he must be willing to give his entire support to its candidate. No half-measures would succeed. "You must be for us or you must be against us; help us or leave us alone, one or the other." These forcible words had stirred the ambition which was such an important factor in Manning's life, and his far-seeing eye had taken cognizance of that future day when the "organization" would have secured for him the prize on which his heart was set. One clever speech, easy to one to whom words and the gift of expression were like facile tools, awaiting only their master's handling, and the result surely would justify the means, for the generations of the future would forgive a plausibility which led to the accomplishment of that aim which, in his opinion, could not fail to be of benefit to mankind. He walked slowly over the soft, new-fallen snow, building up for himself that monument which was to hold his work and his career, seeing himself at no far-distant date a leader among men, and the master-brain which would control the minds of

MARION MANNING

statesmen and governments—showing the world the full meaning of that which had lain for so long dormant within his versatile and restless brain. These dreams of a future golden reaping were interrupted by the memory of his wife's face as he had last seen her, and by the words she had spoken. Doubt tormented him again. He remembered how, over a year ago, when first he had met Marion, and he and Mrs. Carling were discussing politics, he had spoken of the divers threads that pulled in different directions—of the difficulty to know which was the right thread to pull, which was the strongest. Now the threads were all pulling at him. The good that was in him, and the sweet, pure influence of the girl who had belonged to him for seven months, made him face the situation from the outlook of diffidence and perplexity, and for once in his life ambition did not settle the matter in overbearing domination. A seat in Congress and political prosperity stood in opposition to a loss of self-respect involved by the championship of a cause which was unworthy of any true effort.

He stopped by the road-side, leaning his arms on the top rail of the wooden fence which bordered the road, and looked across the fields of unbroken snow to the distant woods, clad as they were in their winter garment of unrelieved grayness, which broke on the horizon as a dark mass of shadows. Above, the sun was shining, the sky was of a clear, pale blue, the air was still, nature icily beautiful, wrapped in a breathless semblance of untroubled sleep. There was no sound heard save the distant hum of the town, and Manning stood alone, with the perfection, the purity of God's world surrounding and encompassing him. It seemed to him, then, as if dissatisfaction and the longings of humanity had dwindled into a peace that is greater, more lasting, more satisfy-

MARION MANNING

ing even, than any other, and that can be found only in the stillness and immensity of the country, where nature holds the world in a potent spell. Just as if a magic wand had touched him, his passions and worldly desires subsided, and then slowly faded before the conquering good. The vision of his wife's face had wrought the first change in him—nature completed the work. He stood immovable, confident, and quietly serene.

Suddenly he turned. A gray-haired man, with bent head and a slow, thoughtful gait, was approaching. John watched him as he came nearer to him, and a smile flitted across his features. He had recognized Mr. Cartwright. Another spoke in the wheel of fate! Then the older man looked up, and met the friendly glance of the younger, and they both shook hands.

"Shall we walk together back to the city?" Cartwright inquired, and the hope of the "machine," side by side with the chief of the dissenting party, sauntered slowly back to New Bristol. Manning, who was full of his new resolves, plunged at once into the heart of the chief subject of thought which was occupying both of them.

"What do you know about Leffet?" he asked. "Have you any proof of his complicity in the trolley-car scandal?"

"No actual proof," Mr. Cartwright answered, looking at John with evident satisfaction, although with surprise; "nothing which in a court of law would convict him—but enough circumstantial evidence to convince me that the man has deliberately lied, and beyond any doubt cheated his fellow-citizens. He is unworthy of consideration, in my opinion, and quite unfit for any responsibility. Why should you intrust the welfare of the people of New Bristol in his hands, when their needs can be absolutely nothing to him,

MARION MANNING

when he has deliberately plunged whole families into ruin? He is cold-blooded and unscrupulous! Manning!"—the speaker stopped in his walk and faced his interlocutor—"help us in this matter! Show the 'machine' that you are not afraid of it; that you're too good a Republican to work for a man who is unworthy to represent the Republican party. And then call to your side all the men who are pure-minded and disinterested, who want good government, and who are for the people first and foremost. If you do so, they will blindly obey you; you would fight a winning fight; I am sure of it. John, I have known you since you were a boy, and your father was a great friend of mine, but I would follow you if you led this cause, and what is more, obey your orders, and not only I, but many others also, who have seen much of politics and of law." The man's voice trembled as he pleaded his cause, and he laid his hand on the arm of his companion with a gesture of appeal, strong and yet pathetic. John was moved, but, prodding his cane in the snow, he retorted, with energy:

"But I do not know that Leffet was culpable. I have no proof of his dishonesty. It's wrong to condemn a man unheard. I must hear his side of the case first, then only will it be possible for me to judge. You talk of breaking with the 'machine.' That is a more serious step than you contemplate. It means working for its overthrow, for its dismemberment. It means the downfall of the Republican party. No party, as no business, no government, or no army, can exist without an organization. Like the members of the body it must act in unison, in pursuance of some plan that is preconceived. Once divided, its power is gone. You can't have good without bad, and there may be some flaws in the system, but an organization, or 'machine,' as you call it, is the inevitable outgrowth

MARION MANNING

of a desire among the people of a party to make law and order the real foundation of their strength."

"You are right," the business man rejoined, "law and order are inseparable from lasting strength; but the law must be good, and the order must be derived from the right source, otherwise they will only do harm, and the strength will be a bad strength. If the leaders of an organization are corrupt, the organization is bound to become corrupt, too."

"There I differ," John interrupted. "There are great corporations and great armies ruled by wise laws, and ruled well—organizations which accomplish good as we know it—whose rulers are corrupt and far from what men should be. There are in various great Church organizations men at the head utterly unfit, immoral, debased. Yet in spite of these depraved rulers, in spite of preacher and bishop whose private lives are the opposite of what they preach and teach, the churches they rule grow stronger and do more good now than ever before. You recall the many abuses during the darker ages in the name of religion—abuses too often the result of personal feeling on the part of a few men, yet because of this or in spite of it the Church continued to increase, religion grew to mean more and more in the daily life of men, and in proportion as the rulers were given over to evil those they ruled became better. How do you reconcile the facts?"

"I don't reconcile them, though I must accept them," Mr. Cartwright replied; "but I contend that a priest, if he is bad, will contaminate his congregation; that if his private life is evil, the good advice which he gives from the pulpit will be words thrown away, and that if the Church does not recognize this fact before it's too late, and remove him from his post, his parish will deteriorate, his hearers will dwindle, and his people will be alienated—drawn away by other sects and other

MARION MANNING

beliefs. Manning, believe me, the principles of the Republican party are not only good, but they are high-minded and great; but, if the organization in New Bristol uses them simply as tools to gain personal success and power, no one here will believe in the truth of those principles, or in their good, and the party, or at least its power, will be destroyed. Truth is the only corner-stone on which a building can be placed that is expected to stand. Happiness, prosperity, good government are inseparable from it, and politicians will never be statesmen till they realize that honesty and truth must be integral parts of any policy or law which is to make the country great, or do good to the people. If you suppress truth, you suppress justice, you suppress patriotism! The 'machine' in New Bristol is not a patriotic organization. It is unscrupulous and corrupt; it embodies the concentrated desire for power of one man. Recognize this, and show the people that you have courage, that you can face them and say: 'I am a Republican, and I believe in the nation, in the State, and in the town of New Bristol, but I will *only* promote the interests of the people for good government; I will vote only for the right man; I will work for the people, if they want me, but only for what is just and right, and, above all, for what is true!'" The speaker stopped abruptly, threw a half-timorous glance at his companion, as if to apologize for his vehemence, and then, with a quick change of key, but still with some emotion in his voice, remarked: "Our ways separate here. I wish that I could make you see with my eyes. Good-bye; best regards to Mrs. Manning." And he went off rapidly to the right. John pursued his way home slowly and in deep thought.

As he neared the house he met his cousin Electa, who accosted him with great excitement.

"Cousin John!" she cried, "is it possible that you

MARION MANNING

are going to help that iniquitous, dishonest man, Lef-fet, to become mayor? He has stolen money from the poor, he never goes to meeting, he plays cards on the Sabbath, and yet they say he wants to be mayor!" She paused, out of breath. The long, old-fashioned sealskin coat swayed to the right and to the left as Miss Electa stood, first on one foot and then on the other, before her astonished cousin. "Cousin John," she resumed, "you cannot do such a thing! As the Lord knows, I am a weak woman, but I should feel it incumbent on me never to lower my voice till he was defeated."

"The Lord help us, then," John muttered to himself, and then, as she questioned him as to the remark he had made, he retorted, quickly: "Nothing, nothing!"

"Well, Cousin John, of course I know that my words are but poor workers, and that you will not heed what I say, but I will pray, pray that your eyes may be opened, and that you may be guided to do the Lord's will."

"Well, pray away," disrespectfully retorted Manning. "It won't hurt me. Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!" In a distinctly irritated frame of mind he walked up the path to the house, where the sound of female voices in the sitting-room made him retreat hastily to the library, quickly shutting the door behind him. On the table lay a sealed letter addressed to him. He opened it and read:

"DEAR MANNING,—We propose to hold a large meeting at the Town-hall on Jan. 5th, and I want you to be one of the speakers. All New Bristol will be there. You will be made chairman of the meeting, and your speech will be the oration of the evening. Will you introduce Mr. Leffet's name, as one of the speakers?

MARION MANNING

"By-the-way, Congressman Riley will resign this term. I have just heard from him.

"After the mayoralty contest we must commence the congressional one.

"Yours very faithfully,

"DAVID S. ROBBINS."

VI

"Love dissipated to shining ether the solid angularity of facts."
—EMERSON.

IF we believe that a fate rules our lives, and that our actions are but the reflex motions of a powerful and guiding hand, then much must be absolved us, and the mistakes which we make, the sins we commit, cannot be laid wholly to our charge. If, from the earliest ages, it was decreed that when the crucial moment of our life came we should turn our footsteps to the left instead of to the right, it does not seem fair to blame us for following and obeying the verdict of a destiny as incomprehensible as it is powerful. Yet we are told that self-will is not incompatible with the knowledge of a foreordained course, and in some unknown way such a state of being is made possible, for when the time comes to choose the right or the wrong way the struggle is as great as if we alone were the first to be brought face to face with a problem which only the need of the moment had created. Manning, therefore, had to decide upon his course of action in total ignorance of the step which a relentless fate had ordained that he should take, so that of his own free will, and yet fettered, he chose the wrong path. This statement sounds contradictory, and yet is true; as things that are beyond us seem twofold and opposite, and yet are one.

The meeting took place, and John proposed Mr. Leffet's name in a speech which was a triumph of de-

MARION MANNING

clamatory and logical art, and which proved to the satisfaction of eight-tenths of the people present that the man he was presenting to them was worthy of all their esteem and respect, and that the stories which had been circulated about him were not only unjust, but quite unfounded. Robbins was delighted, and the campaign which followed was a fruitful one, for Lef-fet was nominated mayor at the convention which met at New Bristol in May. Manning got his reward also, as the same convention nominated him as the Republican candidate for the member of Congress who was to replace Riley. In the following August both men were successfully elected, and Manning reached the goal towards which his footsteps had been turned for many years. To accomplish this end, however, he had been compelled to relinquish much of his self-respect, and at first this surrender of conscience to convenience had weighed heavily upon his spirits. His wife had been very hard to convince of the justice of his action, and had evinced great dismay when first told of his decision; Mr. Cartwright had not expressed his disapproval in words; but his manner and looks had undisguisedly reflected his feelings. These, and many other circumstances, had combined to irritate and embitter Manning's temper, transforming him at home into an irascible, querulous companion, who was only able to resume his habitual state of satisfaction and to regain his old, easy-going ways when his popularity was demonstratively proven by the unanimity of the convention which nominated him to Congress. In the work and in the excitement which followed his nomination, he very naturally forgot the disturbance of the winter. Marion profited greatly by his change of temper, for she had not been able to understand his moroseness and ill-humor, though she had remained trustfully loyal to him, with unceasing care trying

MARION MANNING

to distract and please him. Meanwhile, her love for John having made her tractable, she had become a strong believer in Leffet's cause, and as a tenet of belief she had upheld her husband's action. Miss Electa, not being in love with John, nor sharing in the admiration for his qualities which most of the townspeople of New Bristol felt, was never convinced of Leffet's innocence; and, as a result of her unchanged views, and of her open way of expressing them, she and Marion had several fierce arguments, which ended in a partial rupture of the friendly relations which had existed between them since October. Marion was too blindly faithful to her husband, and too engrossed by him, to listen with impartiality to any views adverse to his; and she punished his poor cousin for the crime of upholding a different opinion by marked neglect and indifference.

"Well, my dear," Cousin Electa had said, at the last battle of words between them, "you are a good woman, I have no doubt, but you are sadly perverse and warped on this subject. 'There are none so blind as those who won't see,' the proverb says, and I think so, too. As the Lord knows, I am not proud and conceited, but I have my views, and you can't change them, so we must both go our own ways."

"We will, indeed," cried her impulsive, hot-headed companion, and she had kept her word with relentless consistency. Miss Manning felt this unjust treatment keenly, and while endeavoring to console herself by increased devotion to her church and her clubs and charities, she yet inwardly craved for the personal sympathy and the love which were withheld from her. But Marion was too self-centred in her happiness to understand the needs and desires of those who were outside the call of immediate necessity in her life, and with a cruelty which was born of ignorance hurt the

MARION MANNING

poor woman whose affections she had, with persevering determination, slowly gained. When John was nominated, however, with the joy which she experienced came a feeling of indulgence for all who bore his name, or were in any way connected with him, and she once more sought out Miss Electa and made her share the pride and delight which were overpowering her.

The summer followed, with its hopes and anxieties, its canvassing and speeches, with its processions and illuminations, and ended in the triumphal result of a successful election. Marion's enthusiasm at this event was so contagious, and coincided so entirely with his inner feelings, that John's reserve disappeared, and he let her see how much he had desired this event, and how he rejoiced that his ambition and will had obtained for him the consummation of his wishes. Even Marion was astonished.

"John," she said to him, "I *knew* that you wanted it; but I never dreamed that you wanted it as much as that. Oh! I am glad for you." It was like the opening of a lantern-slide, disclosing light that is unexpected, but the next day it was shut again, as tightly sealed as it had ever been.

Before moving to Washington the Mannings went to Garton—the same sea-side watering-place where they had spent a month the previous summer—and there took rooms in a small hotel overlooking the sea. Marion was to remain there entirely until they migrated south; John was to make it the headquarters whence he could take flying trips to New Bristol, where he was often called upon to fulfil some of the political obligations imposed on him with the assumption of his new dignities. Marion, therefore, said good-bye to New Bristol and to Miss Electa in September. She left behind her the stiff and severe-looking figure in black silk of the old maiden cousin, outwardly the same

MARION MANNING

as the preceding year, but inwardly changed, who now must continue her life as if nothing had ever come into it to alter it, to enlarge her views and to broaden her sympathies, to quicken her sensitiveness and to awaken in her desires for other things, desires which now would have to be deadened again before she could resume her contentedness of the old days. "As the Lord knows," she said to herself, with her head bent in an unusual fashion, as she walked home from their house, which they had left now for a wider field, "I don't approve of all Cousin John's ways and actions, and Cousin Marion was very peculiar when I disagreed with her; but they are young, and different certainly from the others here, and it was nice to eat meals with them and hear them talk; and she is a sweet young woman. Well, I shall miss them sadly." She pursued her way, and half an hour later was endeavoring to concentrate her whole attention on "What's become of Waring since he gave us all the slip."

The season at Garton had been over for several weeks when John and Marion arrived, and most of the hotels were closed. A few people, however, still remained in their cottages, so that Marion was not likely to feel loneliness while her husband was away. Among those people was Miss Hart, whom she had known and liked the previous summer, and with whom she began an intimacy which was destined to grow into a life-long friendship. Marion had suffered from the heat of the summer months, coupled with the strain of uncertainty, but the bracing air of Garton soon put new life into her veins, and she glorified in the deliciously invigorating sea-breezes. The joy of living came back to her with increased intensity, while a gallop over the sands brought to her that feeling of tingling intoxication of spirits which she had not experienced for several months.

MARION MANNING

"What are politics and books compared to this?" she cried one afternoon, as she and John rode homeward in the twilight. "There is no thinking about this; it's just living and joy! It doesn't satisfy *you*, I know; but *I* think there's nothing like it. Oh! I know what you are going to say—that I don't always talk like this; that I want other things, but I don't now; I want to ride, ride, forever ride!" and, at a touch from her whip, they were once more racing over the singing sands. When she stopped again her cheeks were flaming and her eyes brilliant with excitement. Suddenly exclaiming, "There's Molly Hart!" she started forward once more, and John was left behind to follow more slowly.

"What a child she is," he reflected, while a little, annoyed frown indented itself on his forehead; "and yet she can be dignified. She is very simple, though, and unconscious; I wonder if it adds to a woman's attraction to be as unconscious of her charms? How pretty she is, though! By George! beauty is a card; goodness is well enough in its way, but it isn't exciting. Still a combination— Well, we'll see!" Then he bowed to Miss Hart, who stood with Aleck Houghton by Marion's horse, on the other side of the road.

"Well, Aleck, how are you?" He bent to shake hands with the girl as he nodded to her companion, then turned with a quick aside to Houghton: "Flirting again, are you? Good luck to you!" and he laughed a subdued laugh. The other man flushed angrily, but only replied, in a quiet voice:

"Glad you got your election. I have just been congratulating Mrs. Manning." It was John's turn now to look annoyed.

"No, chaffing as usual, I see," he answered, crossly. "However, thanks for the congratulations." Then

MARION MANNING

they parted, for the pedestrians went in the opposite direction from the riders.

"Why don't you like Mr. Houghton?" Marion inquired, as soon as they were out of ear-shot. "Every time he speaks to you he makes you cross. Do tell me why it is."

"Oh, I don't know; you can't like everybody, and he irritates me, that's all. I suppose it is his manner, or something; he is so confoundedly pleased with himself, he thinks himself superior to the rest of mankind."

"John, I'm sure you're wrong there," Marion responded, eagerly. "He is the last person, to my mind, whom I should call conceited."

"Well, have it as you will," he replied, in a tone which implied that he had enough of this subject of conversation. "You have evidently taken a fancy to him, and my likes and dislikes don't seem to affect you one way or the other."

"Oh, John!" she cried, and then was silent; but her gray eyes became troubled, and she perplexed her mind with questions that were not useful.

Notwithstanding John's assertion, Houghton could not be characterized as a man who considered himself superior to his fellow-mortals, unless a certain quiet manner and a great reserve might be classed as such. Of about the same age as Manning, he nevertheless impressed one as being several years younger. Perhaps an optimistic nature and the absence of responsibilities had kept hard lines from his face; at all events, his eyes looked upon life with a thoughtful expression of quiet confidence in the justice of destiny and with a glance of great kindness and of good-humor. There was also a twinkling look in them which betokened a sense of humor, which was lacking in Manning. Houghton was a man who watched the phases of life, the struggle and checkered playing of those about

MARION MANNING

him, with deep interest, outwardly laughing at the mishaps of his friends, but secretly lending a helping hand and a quiet, speechless sympathy, of which they were conscious in an unexplainable way. He read a great deal, practised law by fits and starts, went out into society when his fancy willed it, and sometimes buried himself for months in an old farm-house in New Hampshire which his family had owned for several generations. Always making the best of things when despondent, he did not invite and would not accept his friends' sympathies, and in such a mood would scoff at feelings, patriotism, religion, which, in reality, were integral parts of his nature, though deeply hidden under a cloak of reserve. Such would have been the verdict of those who liked him, of whom John was not one. His enemies would have told a different story, perhaps; but why listen to them? In appearance he was of average height, with a head almost too large for his body, with thick, brown hair, clean-shaven face, and eyes set rather far apart under thick eyebrows. This was the man whose friendship with Molly Hart had been a long-standing fact, of whom it was said that he had been in love with her for many years, and that, though rejected, he had remained faithful in his friendship for her, and steadfast in perhaps something more. He and Molly had known each other from childhood; he had admired her since he was a boy; whether it had grown into more than friendship not his closest friend could discover, and she was not one of those who talk.

Hers was a rare character, filled with sweetness and straight steadfastness; womanly and gentle, too, she was, and universally popular with both men and women. Several men had been in love with her at different times, but had met with no encouragement, and when her family had expostulated with her, she

MARION MANNING

had told them quietly, but with decision: "I don't care for them; I shall never marry a man unless I love him," and that had closed the discussion. Spiteful tongues said that she cared for Aleck Houghton, and that he had never asked her to marry him, but that again was gossip.

A week after the episode just related, John was obliged to return to New Bristol on a matter of some political urgency. It was the first time that Marion had been parted from him since their marriage, and she found it very hard to let him go.

"I sha'n't be away long," he said, as he kissed her; "and I am sure that Miss Hart will look after you well while you're alone."

"Oh, how I shall miss you!" she cried. "John, don't stay away long; you won't, will you?" And then he went away. She refused to see any one that afternoon, but wandered on the sands in a sad, lonely frame of mind. That evening, in her little sitting-room, by a round table, on which lay her writing-pad, and which was lit by a lamp which had a green glass shade, she wrote her first letter to him.

"MY DEAREST,—It is only four hours ago that you left me, but it seems much longer, and yet I have not been really unhappy, because I have thought of you all the time. Isn't it strange that a single person can fill one's life so completely that the rest of the world dwindles into nothingness? It seems to me now as if the world was just you and I, and as if all the other people in it were only shadows, that move about without any reality. I know that they are there, but they mean nothing to me, because when I am alone my thoughts are all *you* !

"Oh, if you knew, dear, how you filled every part of me—I have told you so often and often, but each time it seems to me that the last way of telling you was weak and badly expressed, and that I must say it again in stronger language.

MARION MANNING

"Does it bore you to hear so much repetition? You must never get tired of it; but I know that you won't, because if my whole mind and heart are absorbed by you, it is all your fault. 'You never should have looked at me if you meant I should not love you.' Ah! my dear, I say that, and yet I am not even sure that it is true. I think I should have cared for you if you had never looked at me; but then you would not have known, and my life would have been very different. I don't like to think of that side of the picture; I don't dare to think of what my life would have been without you, because I should have loved you still and just the same, only without the joy.

"Think of it! My childhood and girlhood were spent in preparing for you. I dreamed of you! I imagined you; I wove stories about you and longed for your coming. Then you came, and you brought joy with you, and changed my dreams into reality. I often wonder why I should have been picked out among so many for such happiness. It isn't often that dreams come true, but with me they did, and this is far, far better than the imagining. If it can't last for always, then I hope that when it ends my life will stop too. But it must last till the day when the light will go out, with us in it, and we shall never know that the darkness came.

"I shut my eyes now, and I can see you standing before me, with all the qualities I most love written in broad letters over you—generosity, patriotism, truth, and round them all a big circle of light which spells, Greatness. If you were not great I wonder whether I should love you as much as I do! I am always asking myself questions like that; always probing my love for you, but it resists everything, for it is greater than anything else, and at the end of my questioning I only want to run to you and throw myself into your arms, and laugh and cry with the very breath of the happiness and the love I feel.

"Do you know that I have no pride left? That I don't mind letting every one see how I feel, and how much I love you? Oh, dear, it is so good to love and be loved, and some people never know what that means.

"This afternoon I walked by myself on the beach just

MARION MANNING

at the time when the sun was setting. It went down into the water like a red ball of fire; but first it streaked the sky with long bands of orange and crimson. I wished you had been there to see it with me. When I looked at the west I was blinded by the radiance of the sunset, and do you know of what it made me think? 'There's a glory of the sun and a glory of the stars'— How does it go, that verse, do you remember? It's in the Bible, but I don't know where, but I know there were many kind of glories, and that the glory of one was far higher than that of the others. John, I don't mean to be sacrilegious, but when I thought of that verse and saw the glory of the sun, I felt that the glory of your love was greater than any.

" Kiss me, dear, and tell me again what I never tire of hearing—that I am everything to you, and that you care for me more than all the world besides. You told me that the day we were engaged, do you remember? I have not forgotten; I never shall.

" Good-bye, you who are my life. God bless you, my darling, and give you all that you most wish for, and all the blessings that Heaven can bestow.

" Your own
" MARION."

VII

"I would rather be ignorant than wise in the foreboding of evil."

—ÆSCHYLUS.

TOWARDS the middle of November, John and Marion went to Washington, where they took an old-fashioned house on Farragut Square on a two years' lease. It was large and comfortable and suited their requirements, so that both of them were satisfied with the choice which they had made.

On Tuesday, December 5th, John was to take his seat in the House of Representatives, at the opening of Congress. To celebrate this event, Marion asked her father, Miss Manning, and Molly Hart to spend a few days with them. Colonel Heveril declined her invitation firmly. Even for a son-in-law he could not put aside his scruples, and would not set foot in the Capitol, or in any building which harbored a government so distasteful to him. As for Miss Electa, she could not take such a long journey alone in the cold weather, so that Molly was the only one of the three to come.

The day before Congress opened, Marion sat at her tea-table in the large front drawing-room of the new house. It was already dark, and the room was lit by several soft-shaded lamps and by the dancing flames in the fireplace. Six or eight people were talking and sipping tea, all in the comfortable attitudes which imply a prolonged visit, and not merely a hurried duty call. Among them was Mrs. Caring, who was now

MARION MANNING

deep in conversation with an elderly Senator, and Aleck Houghton, who at the present moment was sitting beside Molly Hart in the large window-seat. They were both talking in low tones, now and again pausing to watch some new visitor come in or out, or to laugh at some joke of their own making.

Marion looked at them once or twice, and then turned to the Englishman who was lounging with no intentional disrespect at her side.

"Wouldn't you like to arrange other people's lives for them?" she asked.

"Remould them nearer to the heart's desire," he quoted. "Oh, dear me, yes! And I often meddle, but to no good. Don't attempt it, if you are new to the game; it's good sport, but it isn't practicable."

Marion laughed. "Well, I don't know; but I think that I could make some people much happier than they are, if they would do as I told them."

"Mrs. Manning!" her companion cried, sitting bolt upright in his chair, "if it's I, don't hesitate; I should be charmed, I assure you. I have always wanted somebody to take an interest in my affairs."

"Oh, but it isn't you," she hastened to interrupt, with a merry smile. "I don't know enough about you to meddle. Besides, you seem to be perfectly contented."

"Contented!—yes," he rejoined, moving to the edge of his chair, and leaning forward with an expression of comical pathologicalness, "but happy, no! I scramble through life. I expect nothing of anybody, and nobody expects anything of me. I have a great sense of humor, and there you are. Can't you do any better for me than that?"

"I must first know what you want before I can do it," Marion answered.

"Not at all. There you're mistaken," he replied,

MARION MANNING

with emphasis. "If you are to be a good fairy, you must know what's good for people without asking them. Another cup, please—no milk; yes, thank you. But I shall tell you one thing; if you could whisper a word in the ears of the bigwigs at the Foreign Office not to forget those far from home; or, still better, if you could induce my old uncle to die and leave me his possessions, why, you would indeed be a good fairy, and I should be your debtor for life. Fame or ease; either will do. But how about you?" he continued. "Don't you, also, want some good gifts?"

"Oh no! I don't need any," she answered, with a smile. "I am perfectly satisfied."

"Satisfied, yes; but no one is entirely pleased with their lot. You *must* have some divine discontent; you can't be different from the others."

"I am, then," she rejoined. "There is nothing I should like to alter in my life, and I can't say more."

"You should say less," he replied, as he leaned back in his chair to stare at the ceiling, "and not tempt the gods. Do you also think that the world is made up of good things, and that people are true, and that two and two make four?"

"I do, indeed," she said, earnestly. "I think that there is a great deal of good in the world, things to live for and work for, which are worth something; and I'd rather think well of people than badly. I'd far rather trust than be sceptical. Probably that's one reason why I am happy."

"Youth, youth!" he cried. "Oh, but you'll have a sad awakening! You'll find the world pretty rotten, and the people in it not much better. You should look at things clearly, and not see everything through a colored glass."

"I don't call it colored," she retorted; "and because

MARION MANNING

you see bad in a thing that I only see good in, it doesn't follow that you're right and that I'm wrong."

"My dear Mrs. Manning," the Englishman replied, lowering his eyes from the ceiling to her face, "I wouldn't for the world shatter your illusions, and only hope that time will not prove the fallacy of your opinions and the truth of mine."

"I believe that the world is only a poor place if you choose to make it so," Marion said, seriously, "and I can't make it so." She rose at that moment to speak to several people who were leaving, and Sir James Leverich's conversation with his fair hostess was interrupted. He watched her as she said good-bye to her guests, then strode to the window-seat and sat down next to Miss Hart.

Sir James Leverich was a representative example of a certain type of well-born Englishmen. He was of middle height, and fair; neither good-looking nor the reverse. Not particularly ambitious nor energetic, his advancement in the diplomatic career had not been fast, and he was now second secretary at the British Embassy in Washington. His social gifts, however, were very great, and he was probably the most popular man in the service. A dilettante in art and in literature, and withal a sceptical, easy-going cynic, whose motto in life had always been "Live and let live," he had friends in all parts of the world and in all stations of life, from statesmen to artists, from actresses to society women. As he stood beside Aleck Houghton in the large bay-window, the contrast between them was very great. Looking at the two men one might well wonder which of them would inspire the greater liking if each exerted himself equally. They were both attractive in their different ways, though perhaps one attracted by brilliancy, the other by depth.

Meanwhile a woman and a little boy had entered

MARION MANNING

the room, and Mrs. Caring stopped short in her conversation to watch John Manning greet Mrs. Walford and lead her up to his wife. There was nothing to see, however, to requite her curiosity. John was smiling, courteous, and friendly, and Mrs. Walford's laugh and voice betrayed no emotion. She was dressed in dark colors, and, though she moved noiselessly and spoke in a low voice, her personality and looks were such that her presence was felt by every person in the room, and Marion remembered again, vividly, the tingling sense of wonder and disturbance which she had experienced at their first meeting, almost two years ago.

"There is a woman," said Leverich, from the window-seat, "who sees what she wants to see, knows only what she wants to know, and is, in my opinion, just what she wants to be."

"What does she want to be?" queried Molly.

"Who knows? God forbid that I should pretend to!" was the rejoinder. "She is a curious woman; one of the cleverest I have met; her brain is like that of a man, for she grasps a situation and a problem with a large-minded impartiality and a judgment which are rare in a woman. She reads enormously, too, and has travelled a great deal; knows a lot of nice people on the other side. Manning, you know, was quite attentive to her—supposed to be desperately in love with her for years."

"Was he? I never heard that," the girl exclaimed.

"Oh yes; her husband was American minister at Teheran while Manning was there, and, when you have to spend four years in such a hole, you must either fall in love or shoot yourself, so Manning chose the former."

"What was her husband like?" interrupted Molly.

"He didn't amount to much," Leverich replied.

MARION MANNING

"He got his appointment through political pull only, and he didn't make much of his opportunities, for, as you know, Manning did the work and won all the fame. I met Walford once, and from that day to this have never understood how she came to marry him. However, he died the last year that they were in the East, and she came home immediately with the child. Interesting-looking woman, isn't she? How do you like her eyes? Queer, aren't they?"

"I have never seen her before," the girl answered, as she gazed still at the subject of their conversation, "and I can't tell you yet what I think of her, though I must say she looks interesting."

Mrs. Walford had, in the mean time, taken the seat on the sofa next to Marion, and both women were talking to the little boy. He was a child of six or seven, with sturdy little figure dressed in a blue sailor suit, with bright, frank eyes, pink cheeks, and a mop of straight, yellow hair, which was cut short in boyish fashion, but was of the unruly kind that refuses subjection to brush and comb. He now stood before Marion, holding her hand and looking up into her face with an expression of expectancy and delight. She had just asked him if he had been to the circus, and he had cried:

"Oh no! Never! But I want to go very much; I want to see the horses and the elephants and the lions and the hippo—" his lips stumbled over the long word. "Please take me to the circus—*please*—oh, I'd love to go!"

"Harry!" his mother said, smiling, "it's not polite to invite yourself; besides, I'll take you to the circus."

"Oh no!" Marion cried. "Let him come with me. I love children, and Harry and I would have a splendid time together; wouldn't we, Harry?" She looked quite as eager as the child himself.

MARION MANNING

"You must let her have her way," Manning interposed, handing a cake to the boy, which promptly found its way into his mouth. "Where children are concerned she is absolutely as weak as water, and Harry and she seem to have taken a great fancy to each other." It was true, for the child, seated on the sofa between his mother and the new, charming lady, was chattering as fast as the cake would let him.

"I have a dog as big as this room—he is Sandy. I'll bring him to see you; you'd like Sandy; he's the nicest dog in the world. The other day he killed a cat in our yard, and then carried it 'way up to my room; it was all bloody, but it was dead, quite dead—only nurse screamed, didn't she, mother? And only I wasn't frightened. I don't get frightened; you see I'm a man." He slid off the sofa and stood before the tea-table with his hands in his pockets, looking at the one big remaining slice of cake there. "Where does the cake go when you finish tea?" he asked. "There's one piece left; it looks very good! Who's going to eat that cake, mother?" his voice took a louder key. "Can't I have that piece?"

Marion shook with laughter, and would have given him his coveted prize had not Mrs. Walford shaken her head decisively.

"No, darling; mother doesn't want Harry to be ill, and one piece of cake is quite enough. Come and sit down and be quiet. Little boys should be seen and not heard, and if you're not good, this kind lady won't take you to the circus." Harry subsided, but his wistful glances from Marion's face to the cake, and from the cake back to her face, were proof convincing that his longing was great and not easily to be appeased.

"He is my only child," Mrs. Walford was saying, in subdued tones to Marion. "He was born two years before my husband died. I am wrapped up in him,

MARION MANNING

and, as you see, I can't reconcile myself even to paying visits without him. I can't imagine what my life would be if he were not part of it."

"You are blessed," Marion said, low, as bending down she put her arm round the child and asked him, "What are you going to do when you're big?"

"I'm going to be a coachman," he answered, promptly, "and I'm going to drive two or four horses, and I'm going to ride, and—I think I'll be mother's coachman; Dodds is so fat, he won't be able to drive when I'm big, and I'll drive instead. I'll have a splendid livery." He was so excited at the prospect of his future career that he forgot his cake. "All green and silver buttons and white boots!" There was a general laugh at this sally, which effectually subdued the boy.

In the mean time Mrs. Walford had resumed her interrupted conversation with Marion. They discussed people and books. She talked of her travels of the previous summer—travels in northern Europe, through Belgium and Holland, and through Sweden and Norway. She possessed the rare faculty, by a few words, of painting a vivid picture, so that those who listened to her could almost see her and Harry, in an old tow-boat, being drawn through the grass-bordered canals of Holland, through cleanly, Old World villages, past farms and wind-mills; or from the large steamer discovering the beauties of wonderful Norwegian fiords, where the mountains and rocks rise from the water's edge like great, gigantic cliffs, and the water is a deeper blue, a clearer crystal, than any other water elsewhere. And her descriptions were not descriptions really, only amusing or interesting word-pictures which delighted her listeners.

"Don't tell me any more," Marion cried at last. "You have so filled my soul with jealousy that I forget my blessings and want to fly away to see all those

MARION MANNING

marvellous things, which I have never even peeped at. John," she continued, "we must go abroad next summer—we can, can't we?" But every one was moving, and Mrs. Walford with the rest. She took Marion's hand and looked at her from the depth of her strange, wonderful eyes, seeming to search below the surface and to probe the outward appearance for some inward revelation.

"I hope that we shall be friends," she said, with her low, musical voice, "and that you will let me see you often."

Five minutes later every one had scattered: guests to their own or to other people's firesides, Molly to her own room, and husband and wife were alone. John went to the chimney and poked the smouldering logs into a bright glow, and Marion moved around the room, pushing back a chair here, moving a vase of flowers there; then she, too, went to the fireplace, and, kneeling down before it, stared at the flames and embers as if she would imprint them on her memory with abiding distinctness, and John stared at her. At last she got up and put her hands on his shoulders and looked up into his face.

"John," she said, with dreamy, half-smiling eyes, "that Englishman wouldn't believe me when I told him I was perfectly satisfied. Why, didn't he know? Couldn't he see it in my face?" She half-turned, leaned her head against him, and looked at the fire. "How wonderful life is," she continued, "and love is the most wonderful thing of all. Do you know that since I have cared for you I have lost myself? I don't know where what was *me* has gone. It's you in me now. I used to wish for things I couldn't have; I wanted to travel, to meet new, interesting people, and see strange sights; but I don't now—all these wishes go when I am with you—they only woke up for a moment a little while

MARION MANNING

ago, but I have forgotten them again. Isn't it strange that one person can change another so completely. I haven't changed you; I shouldn't wish to; but you have changed me. Do you realize it, John?"

"Yes, I suppose I do," he answered. His voice was grave. "But you mustn't love too blindly, you know," and he laughed. "You should be yourself, just as you were before. It is never wise to lose one's individuality, because then one might also lose one's personality," he added, in a bantering fashion. "Come, it's time for you to rest. I must do some work before dinner. *Au revoir!*" He kissed her, and, going to his den, rang for the papers and sat down at his writing-desk.

VIII

*"For it so falls out
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it, but, being lack'd and lost,
Why, then we rack the value."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

AT the opening of Congress, next morning, John took the oath of office in the House of Representatives. It was a very simple ceremony, and many others were sworn in at the same time, but to Marion, who sat in the members' gallery, and whose whole being was vibrating with a thrill of pride, the occasion was one of vast and paramount importance. In her belief he was the only great man on that crowded floor, and the one of whom his country should be most proud. Molly, beside her, divining her feelings, put her hand on hers with a sympathetic pressure, and Marion grasped the strong fingers and held them tightly, until she was able to turn her head and smile at her girl friend.

"Molly, don't you envy me?" she whispered.

"Dear Marion," Molly returned, "I do, indeed."

A week later Molly left Washington, and John and Marion settled down to their new life. And the months slipped by. Manning made his maiden speech in Congress, and was listened to with attention, and also approval. He was appointed a member of several important committees in the House, made friends with influential Cabinet ministers and legislators, and with politicians of all kinds, and in his home welcomed

MARION MANNING

men of both parties with a broad-minded impartiality. His house soon became a centre of all that was most worth cultivating in Washington, and Marion, with her gracious manner and appreciation of talent and intelligence, ably seconded him in his effort to succeed socially as well as politically. She became popular, too, but from a distance, for she made few friends, and did not care much for society, except as a means of amusement for her husband. She was quite content at home, and much preferred to receive people there than to go to their houses. Music, however, had a strong attraction for her, and she looked forward eagerly to any musical performance to which she was invited, or to any concert which she could spare the time to attend. She also interested herself in several charities, and was a regular visitor at the children's hospital.

The only people with whom she became at all intimate were Mrs. Caring, whom she had always known and liked, Mrs. Walford, and Sir James Leverich, who amused her husband, and who in a funny, open way, expressed such admiration for her, and such liking for her conversation, that he was constantly at their house.

Of Mrs. Walford more should be said, for she awakened in Marion a curiosity and interest which increased as the intricacies of her character became more apparent to her. She was a woman of rare fascination and a most original mind, who admired ability and greatness inordinately, and would travel any distance to come face to face with a clever man. She despised weakness, mental or moral, and was a good judge of character on the whole, though she was more apt to suspect a good motive than to believe in it. Married very young to a man many years older than herself, for whom she did not care, her life had not been a happy one. She had craved for affection and for love, and

MARION MANNING

had been obliged to live without it; she had thrown herself into pastimes and interests which gave her excitement, sensation, and diversion. She had aroused admiration, and even love, but she had not been able to awaken in herself any of the feelings she communicated to others. She had become hard and sceptical. Then she met Manning. She exerted her charms on him as on the others, but at first without success. A lonely existence in an Eastern capital, circumstances, and probably fate, combined to make her lose, for the first time, control over her feelings, and before a year was over she realized with intense suddenness that she could not live without him, and that she loved him with all the strength of a passionate nature, which had been crushed and hidden, but which, like a dormant force within tight walls, had sprung through the outlet it had made for itself with a power that was irresistible. Manning had hesitated at first, but she had compelled his love, had demanded and exacted it, and finally she had obtained it, and he gave himself up for the moment to the passion which mastered him. From the start her love was the stronger of the two; but for the three years during which time they were thrown together at Teheran, and while she was beyond his reach, his ardor was the most ungoverned, his outward expression of love the most fervent. And yet, strong as was his feeling for her, it was subordinate to his love for himself, for his career and his future. He wanted her, because she tantalized and fascinated him, and because he could not have her; but he never seriously contemplated any step which would bring public censure on him and imperil his prospects. While he could not hide his emotions from her, hers were veiled from him, and she never allowed him fully to understand the depth of her love for him or its strength. During her stay in Persia her boy was born, and the maternal

MARION MANNING

feeling aroused in her by that event, which she demonstratively lavished upon the child, was distasteful to John. But neither love interfered with the other, although she kept the fact carefully to herself.

Then her husband died, and she was left with a very small fortune, free to remarry. And, very naturally, she expected that John would come forward at that moment and claim her as his right. But he let her leave Teheran, a month later, and return to America without speaking, and for eight months corresponded with her in an affectionate manner which betrayed no sign of passion nor mentioned any word of marriage. When he saw her again he was silent still, and her expectations of marrying him dwindled before her eyes. Two things had contributed to bring about this change of feeling in Manning. The first was, that with her freedom the desire for her had become less urgent; the second was, that she was too poor for him to marry. He needed money to carry on his schemes. Having very little himself, he must either marry a woman with a fortune or not marry at all. Mrs. Walford, also, feeling confident of his love, made the mistake which many a woman of her temperament has made since the world began, of allowing him to see, when she was free to marry him, that she was to be had for the asking; that her love was as strong as his had been, and that it demanded its reward. By her conversation before she said good-bye to him, and by her letters, she gradually opened up her soul to him and laid bare the innermost secrets of her heart; but, as he realized that she was his, if he wanted her, his love for her began to cool, and he turned from her to other interests which were as absorbing and less exacting. And she, poor woman! noticed it, and, her cleverness deserting her, she told him how she cared for him, and exerted all her wiles to bring him back,

MARION MANNING

but with no success. Then, eighteen months later, he announced his coming marriage to another, at the same time, and in a weak fashion, reiterating his love for her, which, in her presence, he had never failed to declare unchanged. The blow nearly killed her, and she went abroad for a year, nursing her wrongs, loving him as ardently as ever, notwithstanding his treatment of her, throwing herself into every form of gayety and excitement, travelling a great deal, fascinating, repelling, or compelling the unwilling admiration of every one she saw, just as she had before, only with this difference, that now she did it with the object of gaining time, of reassuming control over herself, and, above all, of practising those arts of charm which she feared had deserted her when the man whom she most wished to keep snared had resisted her every attempt at flattery, and had seemed untouched by her fascination.

She was now back in Washington, prepared to face any situation and to go to any lengths to win back his love. She put herself out to be nice to Marion, and worked very hard to ingratiate herself into her favor. It was not difficult for her to succeed in this undertaking, for her little boy afforded her a natural channel by which she could cultivate the society of John's wife and gain her friendship, and not only her friendship, but her trust. Harry, from the start, appealed to a side of Marion's nature which made her lavish much tenderness on him, and through him she saw a great deal of his mother. Often the walls of the Farragut Square house would resound with the child's shouts, and the floors to his little pattering feet, and she herself spent many hours at Mrs. Walford's house, listening to his chatter, teaching him new games, or spoiling him by the gift of new, wonderful toys. And at those times his mother made much of her. Marion could

MARION MANNING

not resist a deep feeling of interest in Mrs. Walford, who alternately fascinated and repelled her, aroused her pity or her distrust. She could not help thinking, however, that beneath the open liking and the desire to please lurked an element of uncertainty, and that the smiling face of the older woman might only be a screen used to disguise the presence of dislike.

"Who is she? What is she?" Marion wondered as she had wondered before. "Does she really like me, or does she hate me?" That she was a woman of passionate nature she instinctively knew; but beyond that she only surmised, baffled for once in her intuitive judgment of motives and character.

"She interests me more than any woman I have ever met," she said to her husband once. "I like her, but I don't understand her, and at times I am almost afraid of her. I don't think that she really understands me, either."

"Probably not," he answered, with a smile which she did not intercept. "You are much too good to be readily understood, in this world at least." His voice was caressing and his arm was about her waist; she did not see his eyes.

"John," she murmured, "how good you are to me! Why do you spoil me so? Oh," she continued, with low, intense voice, looking away from him, with glowing eyes, "do you know how much you are to me? Life, goodness, eternity. Heaven can't be better than this! Do you dream, do you realize, how I love you?" She bent her head down low so that her face was almost hidden against his arm, and he could only *just* hear her voice. "It grows stronger every month, John; it is the whole of me now; there is nothing else in me, and it is all fastened on you. Every time you leave me something in me goes after you, a part of me it is. Dear, do you know if you ever really left me you would

MARION MANNING

have to tear me to pieces before you went; you would have to break all the fibres in me which are chained to you—you would have to kill me first. Oh, John, promise me that you never will, that you won't leave me, that you will always love me as you do!" Her voice broke and the tears filled her eyes. He looked over her head with stern face to the window, and with one hand gently stroked her hair.

But before long she smiled again and laughed aloud, scolding herself for the foolish, needless tears; and he left her to walk by himself to the Capitol with his thoughts for his solitary companions. For he had seen much of Mrs. Walford of late, and her old influence was creeping over him. "Where would it end?" he thought. If things could go on as they were, nothing could be better; but discovery at home would be fatal to his comfort and convenience; and to accomplish his work, to master the political situation confronting him, domestic peace was an absolute necessity. He did not trouble himself as to the question of his relations with Mrs. Walford, or as to how far he should allow them to go, because he could not imagine a time or a situation of which he would not be master, nor a problem which it would be impossible for him to solve. Politics were engrossing him more deeply every day. He was in continual correspondence with his constituents, and more particularly with Robbins, and he was representing their interests in Congress for the furtherance of his insatiable ambition. He had such confidence in himself that he believed he was absolutely sure of accomplishing his purposes in life, and that was all he cared for. Whether attainment would ever satisfy him, as the desire for it and the anticipation had promised, was still to be seen. Two women had loved him with rare but different love. Of one of them he had tired three years ago; the love of the other one now

MARION MANNING

bored him. And because the first one was once more beyond his reach, her subtle attraction had returned for him, and he craved her society again. Besides, he could not find out if she had changed in her sentiments towards him or not. There certainly was no longer any feeling of unfulfilled obligation in their intercourse, and he could not rest until he had assured himself that she was still as she had been before he married. It is flattering to be loved ardently by a woman who is universally acknowledged to be far above her sex in charm and beauty, and twice, within a few years, he had known that experience. He was flattered undeniably and had been touched by it, but it had not softened him, nor awakened true generosity or gratitude in him, and neither of the two women had made any lasting impression on his real nature. Yet one was good above many, and the other was capable of much that was noble. One trusted him implicitly and loved him blindly; the other saw clearly, but loved just the same. But an awakening must come to the one sooner or later, and, though Manning would not acknowledge it, he inwardly dreaded the possibility.

IX

"O, what men dare do! what men may do! what men daily do."
—SHAKESPEARE.

IT was a bleak and very cold day in March. John and his wife stood in the front drawing-room of their house. They had just finished luncheon, and John was leaving her to attend a committee-meeting at the House of Representatives. He was saying good-bye to her too, for he was to go to New York that afternoon.

"It is most important that I should see Robbins," he had told her a few days before, "because there are lots of things we must talk over, and, besides, he particularly wants to consult me about something. New York is the most convenient midway meeting-place for us both, so I shall run on there for two days."

She had offered to accompany him on his trip, but he would not hear of it. "Nonsense!" he had told her; "for two days it would be absurd for you to give yourself such unnecessary fatigue."

Now, with an expression that was rather mournful, she was watching him pull on his gloves.

"I am afraid I can't meet you again this afternoon, dear, unless you will come to the station to see me off," he was saying. "This committee-meeting will keep me busy till the last moment. Perhaps, on the whole, it would be better for you not to go to the train. I might miss you in the crowd. Good-bye! I shall be back to-morrow night. Don't forget me," he could not

MARION MANNING

resist adding, as he smiled down into her upturned face.

"How could I?" she said, low, and then he left her. When the door closed after him she went to the window and watched his retreating figure across the square until it was lost to sight. She still stood motionless, however, listening to the wind blow through the gaunt, wintry trees, noticing how the passing pedestrians and carriages were all fighting against the gusts which swept around every corner, and in some places swirled pieces of paper and rubbish round and round in whirlpools of air. At last, getting bored by her lack of occupation, she decided to brave the weather. Wrapping herself in a warm jacket, and with a parcel in one hand, she sallied forth into the street. She walked as quickly as she could against the wind, towards Mrs. Walford's house.

When she reached her destination, she was told at the door that the lady of the house was out. She hesitated a little, and then inquired if "Master Harry" were in. The butler seemed uncertain at first, but on his return from the pantry, whither he had gone for information, he informed her that the child was in his nursery. He then started to lead the way up-stairs; but she, knowing Mrs. Walford's limited resources, and the fact that he was the only person to answer the door-bell, peremptorily refused his escort and went up-stairs alone.

The walls of the staircase were hung with rare old engravings, relics of a more prosperous day, and Marion lingered before each of them with keen appreciation. The thought of all that Mrs. Walford had had and what she had lost came across her mind. She owned this house, it is true, but it was situated in an unfashionable part of Washington, and there were many works of art in it, inherited from her father, who, in his time,

MARION MANNING

had been a great connoisseur and collector; but she had not sufficient money to keep it up and to entertain in it as in former days. Only a few friends now were able to enjoy its treasures. Marion greatly respected Mrs. Walford for not disposing of some of those things which would bring her large sums of ready money; for, whatever were the faults of Harry's mother, blindness to beauty and art was not one of them, and she preferred to keep her pictures and remain poor rather than to buy luxury at the price of them.

In the hall, on the second floor, was a Corot, representing a forest scene; dancing figures on a patch of greensward, which the trees had not infringed on, and which was illuminated by an oblique ray of sunlight falling through the topmost branches of a great oak-tree standing out alone before a dark mass of forest. On her way up-stairs Marion stopped for a moment to steep her eyes in its quiet charm, and stepping a few paces back from the painting to see it more clearly, she leaned against the curtained door leading into the drawing-room. Suddenly, from within the room, she heard her husband's voice. She was so surprised that she did not move, especially when the answering sound of Mrs. Walford's clear accents reached her ears, and in perfect amazement she remained where she was. With painful distinctness she heard these words:

"She doesn't know. She has never suspected anything. She thinks that I care only for her!"

"And are you sure that she is mistaken?" asked a musical voice.

"Claire, have you the right to ask? Don't tantalize me! Don't make me repeat again what I have told you for so many years. My God, Claire, you know that I love you!"

The woman outside the door leaned heavily against it, dazed, dumb, stricken. It was as if on a sudden,

MARION MANNING

from close at hand, a bolt from a blue sky had shattered a great strong tree which had defied the winter storms—it was as if the fiery destruction beside her had blinded her eyes and stunned her senses, as by a physical shock unexpected and overwhelming. All became blurred and indistinct to her, and, for the moment, she hardly knew where she was. Then, slowly, the darkness cleared, and the Corot appeared to her once more. She looked at it with startled curiosity. Why did the sylvan figures in the woodland dell dance so wildly? Why did the sunlight look so pale? Her eyes fell to her hands, and the paper parcel in them attracted her notice.

“Harry has not had his toy!” she reflected, and in an instant and without hesitation she sprang to the stairs and ran up to his nursery, two flights above, without stopping. When she got to his room she was out of breath and very white, so that the French nurse was frightened by her looks, and cried:

“Mon Dieu, que madame est pâle! Asseyez-vous, donc, madame! Harry, ne saute pas sur les genoux de madame!”

“Ce n’est rien!” Marion answered, in a voice so unlike her own that she did not recognize it. “J’ai monté les escaliers en courant, voilà tout!” That was all. “Harry, here is something for you,” she continued, putting into his eager hands the mysterious package. The nurse left the room, and Marion watched him tear off the paper and string, and bring to light a small brown horse with a saddle on it.

“Oh, oh, oh!” he shouted, jumping for joy, and, throwing his arms round her neck, he hugged her with an energy which made her gasp. Then he began to chatter, and she heard his voice and the words, but could make no sense out of them, and she watched his romps and jumps, and thought how fatiguing it would

MARION MANNING

be to run like that. After a while he collected all his animals and arrayed them in a long line, with the elephant leading the procession.

"You must come and help me," he cried, and, catching hold of her hand, he dragged her to the floor beside him. Marion tried hard to play, but she was very stupid, and once made the donkey walk tail foremost, so that Harry rebelled, and she looked at him in a queer, uncomprehending way.

"Why shouldn't the donkey go tail foremost?" she thought, and "what funny animals these are!" She picked one up and looked at it, and noticed that it bore a curious resemblance to a certain soft-eyed cow at Heveril, which used to eat out of Marion's hand in the big field beyond the wood. She wondered if that cow were there still. She must ask her father in the next letter she wrote him. She had not heard from her father for a fortnight. The thought crossed her mind that he might be ill. "I must go to him if he is," she reflected. Then suddenly a soft hand touched her cheek, and Harry's little face peered into hers.

"Are you sad?" he asked. "You won't play with me to-day, and your voice is quite different. You are not angry with me, are you?" His pleading, childish treble woke her from her lethargic condition with a start. She looked at him intently, taking his face in both her hands, and said, slowly:

"No, Harry, I am not angry with you; but my head aches, and I can't play to-day. I must go away now. Good-bye, child. God bless you!" The boy looked at her in surprise; but she rose mechanically and left the room to walk slowly down the stairs. She met no one on the way until she reached the front door, where the butler still stood as he had stood—fifteen minutes, half an hour, hours ago, was it? when she had come in. A moment later she was in the open air again, and

MARION MANNING

the wind tore at her skirt and blew her hair about. She did not go towards home, but walked up the street with bent head and firm footsteps. She could not think clearly; she did not understand all that had happened to her. She only knew that John cared for her no longer. That fact burned itself on her mind in large letters, beat incessantly on her brain, hummed in her ears. The wind roared it, the carriage wheels rumbled it, the horses' hoofs hammered it. It was written on every curbstone; it was posted on every house-door. An acquaintance stopped her and said: "What a frightful wind!" That is what the words sounded like, but to her they meant—"He does not care." A passing newsboy shouted to the passers-by, "*Evening Star*," but to her, "He does not care!" She walked on and on towards the Capitol. At the end of an avenue she saw it looming up white in the gray vista. She turned that way and came up to it, and then went on the terrace—that huge terrace of the Capitol which stands at the head of a large flight of steps overlooking lawns and flower-beds, then bare red earth only. Below her stretched the straight line of a broad avenue, at the end of which were gray masses of buildings. Indistinct blurs now, and the avenue had already twinkling lights scattered here and there. To the right of it Washington lay, that part of it where she lived; to the left a great finger pointing to heaven—the Washington Monument.

It was growing darker, but slowly, for the twilight is long in early March. Only the blasts of east wind and the lowering sky made grayness turn to black sooner than on fairer days. She leaned against the balustrade of the terrace, shaken by the wind, beaten by it, buffeted by it. She was almost alone, only a few men hurried by now and then. No one paid any attention to her. She watched the gas-jets waken on

MARION MANNING

Pennsylvania Avenue; she watched the brilliantly lighted cable-cars flash up and down the street like meteors in a November sky. One and all, lights and sounds, flashed or shone the same refrain, whispered or roared it, "He does not care!" The big building behind her loomed up black and forbidding. She looked back at it, not realizing that this was the place where her husband was to have spent his afternoon hours at a committee-meeting. Her eyes were vigilant, her ears sensitive to every sound, but her brain was inactive, torpid, and what she experienced through her senses, though it reached her mind, was neither realized by her nor understood. She was listless and dazed, suffering in a negative fashion, without being fully aware of it. She had not yet grasped the full significance of the knowledge she had obtained, nor realized its bitter pain. She only knew that she had been struck, and that her husband had given the blow. She lifted her hand to her forehead with a curious gesture of impotence, and then pushed back her hair which the wind was blowing about wildly. The veil, which she had lifted from her face when Harry had thrown himself vehemently into her arms, was still gathered on her forehead, and she now drew it down over her face and straightened her hat as well as was possible in that storm. Suddenly a sense of fatigue came over her, and she remembered that she was very far from home. Wearily she picked her way down the long flight of steps, halting now and then to lean against the marble railings. Her chest hurt her, because the beating wind made breathing hard, but she at last reached the avenue, and, with lagging steps, walked a few blocks to where a row of herds stood. She had avoided the cable-cars because of the light in them, which she felt would hurt her tired eyes, so she got into the cab and gave the driver her address. She

MARION MANNING

closed her eyes, and the herdic windows rattled as they sped over the paved streets; but she was oblivious of all discomfort, and was only recalled to reality when the horse stopped and the door of the cab opened mechanically as the wheels bumped up against the pavement and the coachman stood ready to help her out and to receive her fare. She opened her purse, and finding a five-dollar bill there, handed it to him. He looked at it and shook his head.

"Can't change that, ma'am." She stared at him. "You're my first fare to-day," he added.

"Well, never mind then; I can't wait," she said, and she went up to the front door, rang the bell, and entered the house. The astonished negro, who was left standing on the sidewalk with a five-dollar bill in his hand, was staggered by his good luck, and it was several minutes before the look of incredulity left his eyes, and his whole face became illuminated with a broad and a very radiant smile.

When the full glare of light from the hall met Marion's eyes as she went into the house, she was astonished to find that the aspect of her home was the same as it had been. There was the usual row of cards on the hall table; there were the invariable notes, and on a chair lay a big box of flowers. She opened it mechanically, and disclosed a large bunch of fragrant lilies, and a scrawl in her husband's handwriting. "Take care of yourself while I am away," it read. Her expression did not change as this new proof of his duplicity was forced on her; but she walked up-stairs wearily to her own room. There, also, everything was the same. A bright fire burned on the hearth, a lamp stood on the low, round table by the sofa. The electric lights on each side of her dressing-table were lit, and threw the well-polished silver, with which it was covered, into brilliant relief. She shut her door, took

MARION MANNING

off her coat and hat, and instinctively went to the looking-glass to smooth her hair and arrange it. Her attention was there riveted by the reflection of her own likeness which confronted her, and she stared at it with startled intentness. She saw a white face, and heavy, dull-looking eyes, and a mouth with lines new drawn about it. It was herself, and yet not herself. She looked long and intently at it; then, all at once, she understood everything—confusion left her brain, and was replaced by understanding.

It was true then, true, what she had heard. He did not love her; he had never loved her. He cared for another. He had deceived her for two years. He had lied to her; he had played a game. Her trust had been outraged, her love betrayed. Their life had been false; she had been blind—ignorantly, credulously blind! And now all was changed; she must face facts instead—face the naked, ugly truth. But it was an impossible truth to face, she cried, passionately, from the depths of her soul! She would not face it; she refused to face it. She looked around the room with an angry, rebellious look, and then back at the glass again. But she had heard him say it with his own lips, and his words had the ring of truth in them! She now recognized the difference between his love-making to her and his love-making to this other. What he had said to her had been luke-warm compared to the words she had overheard. She bit her lips hard, and walked up and down the room with her hands clenched together tightly. The man she had worshipped stood clearly outlined before her in the broad light of day, and she shuddered at the sight. How could he—how could he, she thought, have stabbed her so? Why, she would not have hurt a helpless animal as he had hurt her, much less a human being who had believed in her. Yet, such

MARION MANNING

things happened every day; she was not the first woman whose husband had been unfaithful. It was an old story, only it seemed startlingly new to her. "If I had suspected, it wouldn't have been so hard; but I never dreamed of it; I was so happy." She sank down on the sofa, and her restless fingers picked up a book from the table beside her. It was a selection of Shelley's poems, and on the fly-leaf was written—"With all my love, J. M." She smiled pitifully as she put the book back in its place. There was a knock at the door, and old Liza came in.

"Time to dress, Miss Marion," she exclaimed, as she laid a dress on the bed; then she went up to the sofa. "Law, how pale you are! Does your head hurt, honey?" She knelt down beside her mistress, and took the two unresisting hands in hers. "Why, your hands are icy cold, Miss Marion! What has you been doin' to yourself?" She rubbed the soft, white hands with her large black ones, and looked up into Marion's face with all her devotion shining in her anxious eyes.

"It's nothing, Liza. My head aches, that's all. I think I'll dine up-stairs to-night." So Liza unbuttoned her boots and took them off, and helped to take off her dress, and slip on a loose wrapper. She then made her lie down on the sofa and covered her feet with a woollen spread.

"Now I'll go down and see about some dinner for you," she said.

Marion lay with closed eyes, and slowly two big tears crept out from under her lashes and trickled down her cheeks. She was so tired and miserable that Liza's kindness strangely upset her, and, for a moment, the rebellious mood was replaced by a childish desire for pity and comfort, and she longed for loving hands to stroke away the pain from her aching brow, and to hold her restless fingers tight with a soothing, controlling

MARION MANNING

pressure. Suddenly she thought of her father, and a craving for his love and sympathy came over her with an overwhelming desire. She had only seen him once since her marriage, for she had not returned to Heveril since that happy spring day, almost two years ago, when John Manning had taken her away from the home where she had spent all her young nineteen years. How had her father passed his lonely existence without her? How much had the separation cost him? She had not thought of him in that light before—in the light of suffering. She had been too blindly happy to spare a moment of sympathy for his loneliness. She had been selfish with the selfishness of a great love.

She rose hastily from the sofa. Well, her father had been miserable, it is true, but she was doubly miserable now, miserable as he had never been, broken by a grief greater than any she had ever deemed possible. Why should she have been stricken? She was walking up and down the room again with her unseeing eyes bent on the floor. What was the good of loving, of sacrifice, of self-abnegation for another, if it was to be rewarded by this? All she had done for her husband, all she had given up for him, all her striving, all her hoping, all her love were thrown back in her face, were cast aside, declared worthless and useless. She had done him no good; her love had made him no finer, no better. He had used her when he needed her; he had thrown her aside when another could please his fancy more. She ran to the door, locked it, and put her hands high above her head, pressing them hard against the wooden panel of the door. Her head was thrown far back, so that the muscles of her neck below her face were strained to their utmost stretching, and she looked like a woman striving to hurt herself, to inflict some sharp physical pain on a deadened sense of bodily feeling.

MARION MANNING

"Oh, God! God!" she cried, low. "I can't stand it—I can't stand it!" Her head fell forward and her hands dropped to her face and clutched it sharply, and she rocked her body to and fro. It seemed as if some terrible pain was grinding her strength from her, as if madness was creeping into her eyes. Like a hunted thing, she turned and ran back to the sofa and fell on her knees beside it, burying her face in it. And one cry burst from her parched lips—"And I love him just the same!"

Later on she became quieter, but she turned the lights all down before she unlocked her door to readmit Liza.

Meanwhile, Manning was on his way to New York, speeding through the dark, in a brilliantly lighted train, amid comfort and luxury. He sat, for an hour or more, in a big arm-chair in the drawing-room car, with his lap littered with newspapers over which his eyes strayed carelessly, while his mind was busy with his own thoughts, and gave but cursory attention to the evening telegrams. He leaned his head comfortably against the back of the chair, and mentally surveyed himself with that feeling of satisfaction which usually comes from the realization of well-earned rest and pleasure or from the consciousness of successful attainment. This satisfaction should have been of a mental rather than a moral calibre, though if his moral nature had become warped by success his conscience had also gained elasticity with the passing years. And yet, from the beginning, his standard of right and wrong had been modelled by his will and moderated by his desires, and as his will had become stronger with age and his ambition more exalted, moral exactions had become less stringent and more pliable. His falls from a high ethical stand-point had been the frailties of a weak character undesirous of opposing the assaults of a domineering will and ambition. Suc-

MARION MANNING

cess, too, had crowned his path, and every lapse from duty having been undiscovered or unpunished, his nature, unassisted by the friendly and strengthening stimulus of adversity, had suffered retrogression and decay. For when he married Marion for the sole and the deliberate purpose of enlarging his opportunities and of advancing his career, at the same time loving another woman with the only love of which he was capable, the love of passion, and yet with not enough generosity or devotion to sacrifice his own interests to her demands; when he had been obliged to practise deception and untruthfulness; when, to satisfy his own vanity and pleasure, he had left his wife to appease Mrs. Walford's jealousy and grief; and when, later, he had forgotten his part of that wrong done, then little can be said as palliation for his actions. But the future lay before him glittering beyond the broad field of grasped opportunity, and he smiled to himself at the thought of what he had done, was doing, and still would do.

At last he rose slowly, shook the dust off his coat, and, leaving the papers on his seat, went into the smoking compartment, and later into the dining-car. It was nine o'clock when the train reached Jersey City, and its crowd of passengers filed on to the ferry-boat which was to carry them across the big, broad river to the towering city on the other side.

Manning walked to the extreme front edge of the boat and leaned over the railing, while the cold air beat on his face and head, and was refreshingly invigorating after the overheated, vitiated atmosphere of the train. It was rather foggy and the sky was overcast. Indistinct shapes glided up and down the watery stretch—shapes that varied in size from the little tugs to the long, low tows or high passenger river-boats, all lit more or less by twinkling lights, the river-boats

MARION MANNING

shedding a glare of illumination over the close-passing ferry-boat, all emitting noises more or less shrill or hoarse, while a swiftly flying launch or a tossing row-boat or other menacing ferry-boats ran across the great river, mingling, passing, but escaping one another by marvellous dexterity or by mariner's luck. And the high buildings loomed nearer. Were they the seat of a mediæval fortress or the home of the Brobdingnags? The darkness and the blurred lights cast a veil over the glaring defects, over the coarse lines, over the monstrosity of so much of it, and only the suggestion of power, of strength, and of largeness faced the eyes and mind. That huge mass embodied all the concentrated effort of millions of human brains, and Manning's heart glowed again at the thought of what man had done and still could do.

And Marion, two hundred and fifty miles away, had room for but one thought in her heart—what one man had done to her and was still doing.

X

"And out of good still to find means of evil."

—MILTON.

EARLY the next day John met Robbins in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and they went up to Robbins's room, where they were joined by a rich ship-builder of Philadelphia, Mr. Smith, whom Manning had formerly known slightly through political channels. It was to be a long conference, so that John threw himself into an arm-chair and crossed his legs, thus making himself comfortable to listen to the projects of the other men. Robbins sat on a straight-backed chair beside a table, on which he leaned the elbow of his right arm, resting his chin on his right hand and toying with a button of his waistcoat with the other; and Smith, from the edge of a low, black, horse-hair sofa, leaned forward, with one hand on each knee and scanned the faces of the men before him with shrewd eagerness. They were a characteristic trio—the one essentially the man of business; the other the able, rising politician; the third, looking for all the world like an actor, rather than what he was, the stage-manager of a company whose theatre was politics.

Robbins began to talk first. The main object, he said, of the meeting was to discuss a project which one of the Congressmen from New York, Mr. Kelvers, and many other politicians had in view; a project in which he and Smith were deeply interested. It was of vast importance, as, if carried out, it would materially im-

MARION MANNING

prove trade in the whole country, and particularly in the coast States. In fact, it aimed at the encouragement of American trade, and was to give an impulse to the building of American ships for foreign and home commerce. In other words, it was a scheme for the introduction into Congress of a bill to provide bounties to ships built in the United States and sailing under the American flag—a bill, in fact, to create a merchant marine.

“As you are well aware,” he went on, “the merchant marine of the United States is practically nowhere in comparison with that of Great Britain, and the reason for it is this: labor is so expensive here that ship-builders cannot afford to build ships as cheaply as the foreign ship-builders, and, as a consequence, foreign vessels carry our exports and foreign ships do our trading business. The only way by which such a state of things can be changed is to give subsidies to the ship-builders and owners for every ship they build which carries the American flag. The idea is not new, because other governments have adopted it, and the question has been mooted here before, but never with any success. We had other more important matters to attend to; but money is lying idle in the treasury, and now is the time to act. It is also your opportunity, and I should advise you not to neglect it. If you wish to succeed in Congress and make a name for yourself, introduce this bill. Now I will tell you why Mr. Smith and I are particularly interested in this proposition. You will correct me if I do not state your views clearly,” he added, turning to the business man, as he leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs.

“Certainly, certainly; go ahead,” and Robbins proceeded.

“As you know, Manning, one of the sources of revenue of our State is ship-building. Though our coast-

MARION MANNING

line is short, we've made the most we could out of it. But, so far, we have only built schooners for coast-trade. Now, if we could make money by building steamships, if we had the capital to do so, the financial future of the State would be assured. In this country there are comparatively few ship-building companies, and Mr. Smith is the president of one of the biggest of them all, the North American Mail Steamship Company. His idea is this: if you introduce this bill into Congress, and if it becomes a law, the North American Mail Steamship Company will combine with the New Bristol Navigation Company, and New Bristol will be made one of their largest ship-yards. Do you see the result? The United States will have a merchant marine from which the whole country will benefit, and, if we work it properly, New Bristol will come in for a large share of the glory and profits. Isn't that your idea, Mr. Smith?" His small, keen eyes travelled quickly from one to the other of his two listeners, and he noted each expression that flitted across their faces with a sharp glance.

"Quite right, Mr. Robbins," Smith answered, in a brisk tone. "Quite right. The government must give a bounty to each American ship floated, which remains the property of American owners. And, gentlemen, it won't be difficult to make Congress realize that such a bill must be passed. It is a disgrace to the country that we have no adequate merchant marine. We've got plenty of money to do this, and the sooner it's done the better."

"Who owns the North American Mail Steamship Company?" Manning asked.

"Largely Philadelphia and Western capital," replied the ship-builder. "But," he continued, eagerly, "if we join with the New Bristol Navigation Company they will become shareholders and profit by the subsidy. Besides, I propose to make New Bristol our principal

MARION MANNING

ship-yard for the building of ships of eight to ten thousand tons. The harbor is good, the facilities for building great; to my mind it has the making of one of the best ship-yards in this country, owing to its water-line and sheltered position. Of course, we should still build our fast ocean-steamers in Philadelphia, but you in New Bristol would profit just the same from the subsidies received for those built there."

Robbins and Smith both studied John's face. He sat perfectly impassive, apparently unmoved by the proposition.

"What importance," he inquired further, "would these two navigation companies combined have in relation to the other ship-building companies which would receive subsidies from the passing of such a bill?"

"It would be the first and largest company," Smith returned, "and receive the largest percentage of bounty."

"Not a bad investment," John said, with a smile.

"Mr. Manning," interrupted the business man, "if you make this project a go, it will be the best investment you have ever gone in for."

"It seems to me that this sounds more like a business meeting than a political one." Manning spoke slowly, and with one hand lightly stroked his chin. "I must first find out how much the country is going to profit by this arrangement. Is anybody else in favor of it besides ship-builders and ship-owners? No offence to you, Mr. Smith," he added, "but I must have full information before making up my mind one way or the other."

Robbins got up and walked up and down the room.

"Look here, Manning," he said, at last, stopping before the Congressman, "you've got the wrong idea about this thing. It's not a personal, nor even a corporation, affair. It's purely national, and I believe that

MARION MANNING

at the present moment two-thirds of the people of the coast States, and all broad-minded, patriotic men from every State, inland or otherwise, will support this project. As I have said before, it's not a new idea. We are Republicans, and we are all in favor of protection. This is simply protection for our ships, and it's time we gave them that protection. Now, Smith and the Congressman from the Tenth District of New York have talked the matter over, and Kelvers is strongly for it. Meet him and discuss it with him. That's my advice to you. Besides, it's too momentous a decision for any man to take without time for reflection."

"Well, I must be going," Mr. Smith announced, and slowly rose from his chair, but Robbins held him back for a moment as he turned once more to John.

"You understand, Manning, that the reason why we ask you to introduce this bill is because we recognize your ability, and because we think that you, better than any other man, could carry the bill through. It wouldn't be an easy task, and it requires a man of brains and weight to undertake it. But we have confidence in you. Of course, if you feel you can't do it, why, some one else will have to. The bill *must* be introduced, and the only question is, what is the best way to have it done? That's all, isn't it, Smith?"

"Yes, that's it," the latter rejoined. "I hope that you will see your way clear to agreeing with us, Mr. Manning." With that he left the room, and Robbins followed him into the corridor for a few last words.

John was left alone, and with his cane, which had lain on the chair beside him, he furrowed into the carpet, drawing a straight line up and down between his feet, and bending over as he did this with a frown on his forehead. With great rapidity the pros and cons of the proposition chased themselves through his mind and dispassionately he viewed the situa-

MARION MANNING

tion. Clearly, these two men had no interest in the national or patriotic side of the question. It was from the stand-points of money-making and politics that they agreed; it was to benefit themselves and their corporations that they were in favor of a merchant marine. And undoubtedly they would profit more than others by the bill. The consolidation of the two companies was the forming of another gigantic combination. Would smaller ship-yards be able to compete with them? Would not the large companies be able to build cheaper ships than the smaller ones? Would not the smaller ones gradually be absorbed by the larger? This was a time of corporations and trusts; all over the country, in every line of commerce and manufacture, the individuals were being ousted by the capitalists and their concerns. In the great towns small shops were rapidly disappearing, being replaced by the great emporiums which were owned by rich men. Manning saw the day not far distant when society would be divided but into two divisions: the men of money, who would constitute a monopoly of wealth, opposing the men without capital, whose only means of subsistence would lie in their employment by the corporations—in other words, that the poor man must inevitably become the employee of the rich. Still, was not the tide too strong to combat, and if this bill were another spoke in the wheel of centralization, would not the wheel go on turning just the same as before, without its additional support?

Robbins now re-entered the room and pulled up his chair close to John's.

"Smith is a brainy man," he said, "and his business ability is remarkable. What do you think of him?"

John only answered the question by another.

MARION MANNING

"Do you own any stock in the New Bristol Navigation Company?"

Robbins flushed, but did not deny it.

"See here, Manning, we know each other too well to mince matters or walk gingerly on paving-stones. Politics is a trade like any other, and if we benefit the country, there's no need to stint ourselves. The possession of money alone does not appeal to me. I am a simple man; I live in a quiet way. I don't want any of your pretty things, so that funds to me are only useful where they bring me security of power. And yet I got my power without money. No, Manning, this bill may help me to get New Bristol support and more followers, but it won't make me rich. It will make Smith enormously wealthy; indirectly, it can make you so too, but that's no objection when at the same time the good of the country is assured and New Bristol is greatly benefited. So far, you have no stock in either company, and I should not advise your buying any openly. But I can get some for you quietly, so that no one will know of it, and, believe me, it will be a paying business."

"This sounds strangely like bribery," John said, with a strained laugh, as he rose and walked to the window, and then turned and faced his interlocutor boldly. "And where do I get the assurance that I can trust you completely in this matter?"

"Oh, if it comes to that," Robbins got up too, and there was an ugly expression on his lips; "you have trusted me already. Once more or less won't make much difference."

"What do you mean?" cried Manning. The two men faced each other and there was a stormy pause. Robbins was the first to recover his composure.

"Come," he said, "what's the good of this? Unity is strength, you know, and if you are Congressman,

MARION MANNING

I am the man who made you that. I recognize your ability; you must recognize my right to be trusted. Besides, this is a matter above-board, and through it lies your chance to become great. I know no one better fitted to undertake the task, and I am sure that once you have talked with Kelters you will agree as to the advisability of making this project a law. How long will you remain in New York?"

During these remarks John's face had resumed its habitual calm, though his eyes, steely set, looked more sharp and flashing than usual.

"I think that we will settle this question once and for all," he said, quietly. "You say that you have made me Congressman. We will admit that statement, as you control the organization in New Bristol. That fact, however, does not imply anything else. I made you no promises when I accepted the nomination. If I should propose and support this bill, I should do it from my own free will, and as a result of my own decision, not by coercion, nor through the influence of any one else. There is much in the bill that appeals to me. I shall talk it over with Kelters, and, after reflection, will tell you what can be done. I should be glad to please you, and hope that I can see my way clear to doing what you propose. But let us drop the question now for the moment, as I must consult you about other things. What about the post-office? How much is wanted for it?" He sat down by the table, and took a cigar-case from his pocket. "Will you have one?" he continued. Five minutes later the two men were deep in business and political matters, and all trace of friction had disappeared. They were now dealing with facts, not with conjectures or proposals, and each wisely resumed the friendly manner of half an hour ago. When Manning left the hotel an hour later, he went at once

MARION MANNING

to the telegraph-office and sent two wires to Washington—one to his wife and one to Mrs. Walford, apprising them of his delayed return, which would not take place till the next day or the day after. Then he walked up the avenue deep in thought.

That afternoon he saw Kelvers. The New York Congressman was a sincere Republican, and his belief in the proposed bill was earnest and disinterested. He advocated it warmly to Manning, and his argument in favor of it was sound and convincing. It was from the broader ground of national benefit that he drew his views, and he totally ignored the advantage to be derived from it by certain of the large ship concerns. He boldly stated facts. He proved that over ninety per cent. of the country's exports were carried by foreign vessels, and that the United States was dependent upon their services for a part of the income derived from the sale of these exports.

"If war is declared by one of those countries, and their freight-ships are subsidized as transports, why, we must suffer from the advanced rate of freight charges. Why be dependent upon foreign vessels to do our carrying service for us?" He also repeated, under more specific terms, Robbins's plea for protection for American shipping, and assured John that every right-thinking Republican would favor such a measure. "Its effect will be far-reaching and great, and we, who in all other industries and business enterprises lead the world, by the power of our capital and organizations, will be able to compete with European nations on sea, as heretofore we have not been able to. And the money spent by the government for such a purpose would be well spent, and would return interest and compound interest before many years."

When John left Kelvers's house his mind was made up. He would introduce, support, and carry the bill

MARION MANNING

through. It was his first opportunity for personal success, the first chance to make his will-force contagious, his domineering brain a controlling power in national legislation. He would create a great merchant marine for the United States, and would rise in his first term to the level of those older members of the Congressional houses who had made their names symbols of influence, judgment, and power. The personal side of the question would never be raised. Neither Robbins nor Smith would elucidate the country as to their share in the original scheme of the bill, and if, indirectly, he could make money through the venture, why, that fact would not be a drawback to his career, especially as it would never be known. Manning went to bed that night well satisfied with his day's work and elated at the future which lay before him.

XI

*"Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn."*

—BROWNING.

THAT same morning, in Washington, Marion rose after a restless night which had been almost sleepless. She felt tired and listless, but her wild rebellion of the night before had subsided, so that she was able to dress and eat her breakfast at the usual hour, as if nothing had happened. After breakfast she went into the drawing-room and sat down at her desk to write some telegrams—one to her father, telling him to expect her that afternoon by the two-o'clock train; the other to her husband, apprising him of her plans. She had arrived at this decision with her first coherent thought that morning, for she felt that she must have time to think things over, and to readjust them in her confused brain, before meeting John again. At Heveril she would have peace, time to rest and think, and, besides, a speechless sympathy from the love of the old man whose idol she was. Having decided to take the two-o'clock train, she gave orders to Liza about the packing, and found herself left for four weary hours with nothing to do. She looked about the drawing-room, where she was standing, in search of an occupation. The grouping of the furniture struck her as being ugly—the sofa by the wall would look better by the fireplace, she thought; the round table in the middle of the room would be more effective in the dark corner

MARION MANNING

beyond the door. She began to move the pieces of furniture about, and when she had pushed them into their new resting-places, she changed the arrangement of the photograph-frames and ornaments on the tables. She was just putting a large picture of her father on one corner of the mantel-piece when the door opened, and the footman announced, "Mrs. Walford." She stopped still, and with the photograph in her hands looked at the new-comer with amazement.

"Dear Mrs. Manning," exclaimed the visitor, "I forced myself in, as you see, although they insisted that you were not receiving; but I wanted so much to see you about that bazaar, and I knew that you would forgive me for intruding." Undeniably, Mrs. Walford was putting a bold face on the situation, as she had evidently come for the purpose of finding out how much or how little Marion had discovered from her visit to Harry the previous afternoon.

Marion remained by the fireplace without moving, and now replied, coldly:

"I am very busy this morning. That's why I gave those orders."

"Oh, I am so sorry," cried the intruder, moving nearer, with a sweet smile on her lips. "I shall only stay one minute, and you will have to forgive me for being so importunate." She now stood beside Marion, and looked up into her face with an engaging glance.

"I am afraid I can't," Marion answered, slowly, "and I think that I should rather you did not stay."

"Mrs. Manning, what do you mean?" cried Claire Walford, shrinking back a step, while all pretence of cheerfulness disappeared from her face and manner.

"I only mean that I am very busy," Marion repeated, with set face, still holding the picture tightly with both hands, "and that I should prefer to be alone."

MARION MANNING

"It sounds very much as if you wanted to be rude to me?" The older woman's eyes flashed dangerously.

"No, I don't want to be rude, but I can't pretend, and I do not want to see you—perhaps later?—but not now." Her voice shook a little.

"Why later?" asked Mrs. Walford, moving nearer to her with an angry look.

"I don't think we need discuss the question. Certainly, in my own house—" Marion put the photograph on the mantel-piece and looked haughtily at her visitor.

"Your own house does not excuse unwarrantable rudeness," Mrs. Walford said. "You have evidently forgotten the laws of hospitality."

"I don't think hospitality can come into the question between us," Marion answered, looking away.

"And why not?" the other questioned, with apparent self-possession, though her voice was fast losing its self-control.

"Why?" Marion faced Mrs. Walford. "Why do you ask? Didn't you know when you came here? Why else did you come, but to find out whether I knew?"

"Knew what?" Mrs. Walford cried, moving a step or two nearer to her and tapping the floor impatiently with her foot.

Marion lifted her eyes from the carpet, where they had fallen, to her companion's face, and, as she put her hand on the back of a big arm-chair beside her, she answered, slowly and in a penetrating but trembling voice:

"About yesterday. I went to your house in the afternoon, to see you and Harry. They said you were out, but that Harry was in. On my way up-stairs to the nursery I heard voices in the drawing-room. I heard

MARION MANNING

John—making love to you.” She paused, and the silence in the room became oppressive. “Now you know,” she continued, with passion in her voice, “why I don’t want to see you.”

“You listened at the door?” Mrs. Walford said, with a disagreeable laugh, as with one hand she leaned her muff against the mantel.

“You have no right to impute such actions,” the cold voice replied, “and I refuse to answer you. Don’t you think that we have said enough about it now? And won’t you please go?”

“No, I refuse to go. I don’t know what you heard, but you certainly heard wrong. It was the past we were talking about, and not the present. You need not be jealous simply because you are not the first woman your husband has cared for.”

“I am not jealous,” Marion said, low, as she looked aside from her at the light which came from the large bay-window. “I heard enough to know that he loves you now; that he has never cared for me. The rest didn’t make any difference. That did—all the difference.” She spoke almost inaudibly, forgetting her listener. Then she roused herself. “I see now why you have been so nice all this winter?” she said, passionately. “It was simply to lull my suspicions and to blind my eyes when I saw you together, so that you could see him often, I suppose, and get back your old power over him, and take him away from me. Because it was taking him away. He had been quite happy all the time that he had been with me alone, without you. He didn’t miss you as much as you think. You see, he was content to put up with a little.” She had sunk down in a chair, and now laughed miserably as she covered her face with her hands. But the tears trickled through her fingers. “What good does it do you?” she cried. “You can’t have him, and yet you

MARION MANNING

take him from me. And the worst of it is that I can do nothing. I can't avenge myself; I can't hurt you as you have hurt me!" Mrs. Walford had listened to Marion's words without moving, only her hands had come together and clenched each other tightly, and her eyes had grown darker and more stern. She now forgot herself and what she had planned to do, and exclaimed:

"I love him, that's all! I have loved him for years, even though he left me to marry you; even though he was selfish and cold-hearted, it was just the same to me. You think you love him, but you don't, really. No, don't answer; I know better. You only loved an ideal; you loved him simply for his good qualities, his honesty and his generosity, and his brains and his greatness. You never questioned anything. What you gave him was a child's love! Why, if you had known him as he really is you would never have cared for him! You would have been disillusioned, disgusted. But I—I knew everything; knew that he was cold and calculating, and ambitious above everything—knew that he would sacrifice anything and anybody to advance himself. Do you know what he did in college? Oh yes! I am cruel, because I am going to tell you all, so that you can see that my love is greater than yours. He did something there, gave a disreputable card-party, or something of the sort, and his room-mate, Aleck Houghton, was accused of it, and he let him be blamed for it and never cleared him of the imputation. Houghton never said anything, and, of course, it's years ago now, but it wasn't a pretty thing to do—was it? You wouldn't have cared for him if you had known. Well, I knew. And when he was in Teheran, when the massacres took place, he sacrificed the life of one of his servants who had often risked his life for him, simply because they were in a

MARION MANNING

tight place and he feared that two couldn't get out of it. You didn't know that when you fell in love with him, did you? And you didn't know, besides, that he married you on account of your money; that the day before he proposed to you he came to me and told me that he loved me, but that he was obliged to marry you for his career. Well, you see, I knew the man well; what he had done, and what he was capable of doing, and yet I loved him—yes, loved him as you never dreamt of loving; because I love him as he is; because I would throw away everything for him, and do wrong to please him; because in the whole world there is no heaven for me, nor hell, only him, only him!" The tears ran down her cheeks, but she brushed them away and turned her head aside. For a moment there was silence in the room. And the silence seemed interminable to Marion. Suddenly Mrs. Walford turned her head and looked at John's wife, then she went over to her. "Forgive me," she whispered, brokenly; "I am a bad woman, but—I love him."

Marion's head leaned against the back of the big chair in which she was sitting, her hands hung idly over the arms of the chair, her eyes were strained, there were lines about her mouth. She stared at the woman at her side.

After a long pause she said, slowly and in a voice that was strangely sweet and gentle—"I think I understand." Then she halted again; Mrs. Walford did not speak. "I believe you," she went on. "You have cared for him, and he has made you suffer and you have forgiven him everything. But—I can't do anything for you, I am so helpless. I want you to know, though—that I forgive you, though I should rather never see you again—because, you see, it would be hard for me," she paused, and then turned

MARION MANNING

her head away, "and now go, please—I don't feel as if I could stand much more. Good-bye—go, please go." She fell back into her chair, and she cried as she had never cried before. Silently Mrs. Walford left the room.

XII

"Death is not the worst evil, but rather when we wish to die, and cannot."—SOPHOCLES.

THAT afternoon Marion went to Heveril. The train left Washington at two, and was due at Mannville, the station for Heveril, at six o'clock; and Marion, having telegraphed to her father to announce her arrival, knew that he would either come himself to meet her or send some one for her. Her desire for solitude was so imperative that she left Liza behind, to follow her the next day, and was thus able to travel alone, unhampered by the solicitous care of her old nurse. There was no drawing-room car on the train, since it travelled over a road which was unfrequented by tourists and was only used by a small proportion of northern Virginia people. She, therefore, got a seat to herself in the ordinary car, and from it watched, with very listless curiosity, the entrance of her fellow-passengers. Just before the train started two women hurried in and almost fell into the seat directly behind her.

"Dearie me!" cried one, in a high-pitched, nasal voice. "That was the closest shave I've ever known. I'm quite out of breath! Mrs. Leigh, you told me Southern trains were never on time, and you never hurried me out of the Boston store. I wouldn't have bought that red ribbon if I'd known; it wasn't worth it. I ain't quite sure, even now, if it was a wise bargain. Twenty-seven cents a yard for eight-inch ribbon

MARION MANNING

ain't dear; but I don't know if I needed as much as three yards. Two and a half would have done. It's for a glove-case. Mrs. Leigh, now what would you say? Was it extravagant? If I'd known about this train I wouldn't have spent that extra money; but a Northerner can't expect to know more about Southern trains than a Southerner. And you're from Virginia, Mrs. Leigh!"

"I am, indeed," the other woman responded, in a lower key, and with a decided Southern accent. "And trains *are* generally late. We never hurry in the South, and we don't often miss trains. Once I did, though. The train that passes our village is supposed to get there at ten o'clock, but it never does till half-past ten, and that day there had been an accident somewhere on the line; so, of course, I determined the train would be very late. Just as I was getting ready I discovered that my scissors had disappeared; so I decided to find out who had stolen them, and get them back before going to town. Well, you know what niggers are! They all swore they hadn't taken them, and it took me an hour to make the kitchen-maid confess. Even then I expected to arrive at the station at half-past ten, but my watch didn't go with the train time, and when I got there, with my scissors in my pocket, it was a quarter to eleven. Would you believe it, the train had arrived five minutes past ten, and gone at quarter-past? So I had to go back home again."

"Well, you must have bin mad!" her companion retorted. "What did you do to the girl?"

"What girl?"

"Why, the one who stole your scissors—the kitchen-maid."

"Oh, I scolded her; but it's no use, you know, and she's a good girl, and makes delicious cakes!"

"Well, I never, I never!" the high voice cried.

MARION MANNING

"You've no principles, you Southerners! How could you keep a thief in the house? But now tell me, Mrs. Leigh, about that ribbon. Do you think I oughter 've bought it?"

Marion could not resist smiling. There was a New England atmosphere about the latter speaker which recalled Miss Electa. What a good, faithful soul Cousin Electa was, and it was months since she had seen or heard of her.

The train was slowly crossing the Long Bridge over the Potomac. On the other side it halted for five minutes for no apparent reason, and then went on slowly. They were in Virginia now, and the country looked forbidding in its cheerless wintry garb. Marion knew every bit of the road they were traversing. She had often been over it in the old days, and she remembered every house and church, every station on the track, many of which recalled some incident that she had long thought blotted out of her mind, but which now presented itself anew to her, fresh and clear. The last time that she had been over the line was on her wedding-day, almost two years ago. A beautiful spring day it had been, the sun glowing with great splendor, all nature crying aloud for joyfulness: a day which had matched her feeling of ideal content and happiness. To-day, nature was gray and cheerless, like herself, only for nature it was a natural sequence that winter should follow summer, but she had not expected that the cold chill would ever strike her. She did not rebel, however; it seemed as if the rebellious mood had passed from her with Mrs. Walford's visit, only the sadness was more hopeless than it had been. The revelations the other woman had made, in her passionate outcry, had burned themselves deeply in Marion's soul. Many things had been made clear to her, and where she had not

MARION MANNING

craved and desired understanding, it had come unsought, naked too, and cruel. She had thought yesterday that she would rather be happy and blind than know the truth and suffer for it, but in the few hours which had elapsed since then her nature had changed, and now she could not truthfully have felt so. Perfect knowledge she must have, though it kill her, and the scales which had fallen from her eyes now struck her as hideous and deforming spectacles which must have disfigured her. From a happy girl she had become a woman many years older, who looked on the passing landscape with "eyes estranged and sad." There was no desire in her now to change the current of her life, to struggle against fate or to rebel against her lot; for she realized her position fully, she understood her husband too well. All the tears that were in her to shed she had shed; there were no more to come. Dry-eyed, she tried to piece together the fragments which made the whole story and to readjust them for a future course. After all, she thought, why should she alone in this great world have perfect bliss? Everybody was unhappy: why not she as the others? Mrs. Walford's grief had been unfeigned that morning—it was passionate, but it was undoubtedly sincere. Her father had lived a lonely, sad life since she had left him; there was no real happiness there. Miss Electa's life was forlorn and dreary enough. Marion almost laughed aloud. Was she going to make a categorical list of all the people whose lives were sad? How futile, how unnecessary. And hers was but a story oft told, and dull in its repetition.

"I wonder if it will ever get dull to me, though," she thought. It was sharp and intense now, and vivid, with an ugly, startling vividness. It was a sorrow worse than that of death that had fallen on her; and she must now model her life to make room

MARION MANNING

for the grim knowledge which would continually and forever shadow her. But it was hard to make plans for the future, for a future which promised not even the gleam of a far-off happy day. There was nothing for her to live for. Since life had been robbed of its reason, what could she look forward to? If she had had a child! Her face softened and the lines about her mouth became sweet and very beautiful—a child of her own, something to care for, to love, a reason for battling against sorrow, a child to devote all her life to, to sacrifice everything for, to worship. Though it would have been his too, she would not have loved it the less because of that. And the love which she had given to its father, the love also which she would shower on the child, would return to her blessed and overflowing. Something of what she had given would come back to her by the touch of little hands round her neck, by the small weight of helplessness in her arms. It would atone for everything, would give her all that she wanted, all she yearned for. And in the years to come her work and devotion would bear fruit in the life which would get bigger and more beautiful as the seasons passed. The desire in her was so strong that she pressed her hands together with hard, tight pressure and her lips quivered pathetically: “Oh, God! if it could be!” she whispered, brokenly. Then she reassumed control over herself. It had not been. Now it could never be. The consolation of motherhood was beyond her. Along the road which before her stretched its weary distance she must walk alone, without the love of husband or of child to make its length less hard to cover and its irregularities less hard to tread. She who had given, and could give so much, would never know the joy of being loved as she yearned to be loved. As she looked back on her two years of married life, she

MARION MANNING

plainly saw that her happiness had come from within, that the pleasure of sacrifice and of loving had been greater than any other, and that his part she had not so deeply questioned. He loved her, she had thought, that was enough; but *her* love had filled her soul, for her character was made for abnegation. Had she remained happy she would probably have become a devotee at the shrine of love, and her chief joy would have centred in her offerings. But now her offerings were thrown back at her, and she must face existence from a different point of view.

Again the train stopped at another station; about the tenth, it was, in the last hour. The conductor was loitering on the platform. Below the car windows several urchins were turning somersaults and scrapping for pennies. On the road which crossed the track, and which was now blocked by the train, stood a characteristic Southern group. There was a buggy drawn by a trotter, whose reins were sharply held by a thin, sharp-featured man with a sombrero hat and a brown coat. Surrounding him were a number of negroes whom he seemed not to notice, though two or three of them were examining his horse with keen interest. Behind the buggy was a low, tumble-down cart in which sat an old nigger with long, white locks and very tattered clothes. In one of his hands he held loosely the reins of an animal which in its more prosperous days would have been immediately recognized as a mule, but which now was so thin and emaciated that its species would be difficult to recognize; and with the other hand he waved an old torn hat in the direction of the passengers at the car windows.

"My! look at that horse!" the New England voice behind Marion exclaimed, in shrill tones. "Why, in Salem, Massachusetts, he wouldn't be allowed loose.

MARION MANNING

I declare, its cruelty to animals. Now, don't you agree with me, Mrs. Leigh?"

"Well, Mrs. Prime," the Southern voice answered, "I reckon it is cruel, but the nigger can't weigh much, and I suppose that mule would rather be doing what it is than be killed."

"But, in Massachusetts," Mrs. Prime retorted, "the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would interfere. They wouldn't consult the horse. Mrs. Leigh, you're queer people in the South. You haven't the same notions as us. Why, we have a large society in Salem, and it does splendid work, I tell you. My daughter, she's very interested in it. I always approve of young girls having other interests besides finery and pleasure, and this society is a splendid thing for them. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Leigh?"

"Why, certainly," drawled the lower voice, and the other continued:

"The education of girls, to my mind, is the problem of the day. I have pondered and pondered whether she'd go to college or not, and I've at last decided to send her. It broadens their minds, you know, and then she can teach school afterwards, and perhaps end by being the president of a college. It's a grand future! And, do you know, Mrs. Leigh, that in my day it wasn't possible?"

"Not really," was the dejected answer. The lady from Massachusetts talked so fast that her friend from Virginia could hardly get in more than a short exclamation now and then. At last her turn came, as the other paused out of breath.

"I don't know much about girls," she began, "but I have three boys—Jim, and Alexander, and Robert E. The youngest, you see, is named after the great general. Of course, they all go to school, but I don't know what they are going to do afterwards. Mr.

MARION MANNING

Leigh wants Robert E. to study law, but it seems to me that he is more fitted to be a farmer. Now, Jim will be a statesman, an orator, I think. His gift of language is superb. Don't you admire oratory, Mrs. Prime?"

"Oh, of course, but—" but Mrs. Leigh was firm, and though the other lady fidgeted with boredom, her Southern accent kept the field for some time longer. "How characteristically they represent society!" Marion thought. Each one engrossed in herself, lending but an unwilling ear to the views of the other; both totally different, and yet, evidently in a certain, queer way, friends—no understanding, and yet perfect content. "If we only could go through life without being made to understand." A sobbing sigh broke from her, and she closed her eyes from absolute weariness.

The train stopped again. This time it halted in the middle of a bare, ploughed field, and conductor, trainman, and several passengers alighted to discover the reason for this halt. Presently a man re-entered the car and explained, in a loud voice, to a woman at the farther end of it: "The coupling's broken; they've got to send back to Venton to get something to mend it with."

The passengers quietly settled back in their seats and took it good-naturedly and as a matter of course, only Mrs. Prime could be heard protesting against such a slipshod way of running trains. It was after five o'clock then, but it took thirty minutes to repair the damage, so that it was nearly six thirty when they reached Mannville, the station for Heveril.

Marion got up and stepped out on the platform.

"Well, now; if it ain't Miss Marion! Lor' bless you, miss, who'd 'a' thought of seeing you?" And the old colored man who attended to the luggage stood before her, his eyes beaming.

MARION MANNING

"Well, Jim, how are you?" Marion answered, as she shook hands with him. "Are the children well?"

"Oh yes, missie, all well, all well; and de massa, he well, too?"

"He's very well, Jim. Now, will you get my trunks, and where's the carriage?"

"Law, miss, there ain't no carriage here from de place. I 'ain't seen de Colonel for dis long time."

Marion walked to the back of the station, but in vain. There was no sign of a vehicle of any description. Jim had followed her, and looked as concerned as she did.

"Why, I sent a telegram," she said, more to herself than to her companion.

"Law, miss, dat's de reason. The telegraph-man he 'ain't bin here all day. He sick." Marion sighed, in hopeless fashion:

"Well, now, Jim, where can I get a trap? Hurry up and think about it, because I want to get home."

"Well, I know a nigger that keeps a trap. You wait here, miss; I get you a trap."

Marion sat down on the wooden bench facing the road, with her bag beside her. She was all alone, and the wind was penetrating and keen; but she did not feel the blasts that blew round the corner of the little frame station, for she was thinking of the welcome which she would receive at Heveril. Her father would be happy beyond measure, and the joy of the servants, who were devotedly attached to her, would be undisguised and noisy. How could she face it all, she wondered? It was not the home-coming that she had pictured, and the strain of a hearty welcome would be hard to bear.

After a while the buggy, with Jim and another negro in it, appeared in sight.

"Here you are, miss; dis here nigger, Tom, he's

MARION MANNING

good boy. He drive you to de place. I couldn't git a bigger wagon, and I'se 'fraid de trunk can't go."

"Never mind the trunk. I'll send for it, and thank you, Jim." She handed him a piece of silver, got into the trap; they put her bag at her feet and Tom ensconced himself at her side. The horse was a raw, thin colt, which had evidently rarely been in harness before, and who now disported himself as if the buggy behind him were a ball at the end of a piece of string: a ball which could be played with unceremoniously. After two or three plunges, he started off, coaxed by the persuasive voice of the darky, and things went on well till they met the first hill, when the animal stopped short and refused to move. After patient waiting, however, he suddenly decided to go on, and this time at a rapid gait, partly because of a vicious cut which Tom had given him after he fairly got under way, and partly because he was thoroughly warmed up and keen for the road.

It was a strange drive for Marion in the gathering darkness, through woods and fields, alone with a negro whose looks were not prepossessing and whose only recommendation were Jim's few words of praise; in a shaky buggy drawn by a horse that threatened at any moment to dash into trees or fences or to jump the road-side ditches. But Marion experienced no fear. Nothing worse could happen to her than what had already overtaken her. The rest mattered little. Every now and then they passed low shanties from which feeble lights twinkled and before which negro children disported in the twilight. Suddenly, as they were passing one of the huts, a black hound who had been lying on the road, jumped up with a yelp and made a dash at the horse. This proved too much for the already excited colt, and with one bound he was out of control and going along at a

MARION MANNING

furious gallop. They dashed through a pine wood; they grazed a fallen log, and the trap swerved to one side: a little more and they would have been thrown out and hurled to the ground. Marion prayed for the "little more." What an easy solution to the problem which faced her! She was not afraid of death; it would be much better to die; she had no wish to live, for there was no future to repay her for what she had suffered. But she instinctively held on to the side of the buggy as they rushed on madly. And it got darker and darker. The fancy suddenly came to her that they were racing with death. Who would win? she breathlessly asked herself. The wind rushed through her ears, the indistinct trees on either side swayed and bent before her as they coursed past; the negro driver breathed hard—but there was a smile on Marion's lips. How differently she would have felt in her girlhood! Then, fright would have seized her and would have held her tight; she would have glanced fearfully at the black forms that loomed up round her and imagined them living, monster beings; she would have screamed at the narrow escapes they had, at the break-neck pace at which they were going. But now, within her reigned the calm of a great indifference. The faster they went the more contented she was; the jars of the deep ruts over which they passed, the obstacles by the roadway which were escaped only by a hair-splitting distance, gave her a feeling of hope. It could not be that they would escape them all, she thought, and once hit, the result would be obvious. If not merciful death, then unconsciousness would rob her of present torture, and a long illness would make her forget her mental suffering. They rattled across a bridge, below which a dashing, turbulent stream beat its noisy wrath against its stony banks and the wooden piers of the frail structure.

MARION MANNING

She did not know where they were, for they had been driving for an hour or more, and it was dark. She shut her eyes and prayed: "Oh, let this drive be the end; let there be no afterwards." Then she opened them to ask the man by her side if he knew where they were going. He mumbled something—something about its being "All right"; so she said no more. All at once a great wave of pity swept over her, pity for herself, for her husband, for Mrs. Walford, and she wondered why a just God let such things be. Three lives ruined! If death would only come to her now, all would yet be right. She would lose the pain, and they—? "Oh, death is much easier than life," she thought, "and yet I never knew it before." Who would win, life or death, in this mad race? The horse seemed to be beyond his master's control. But the darky had yet a soothing power in his hands, and slowly, gradually, the terrifying pace abated as they swept through two white wooden gate-posts which marked the entrance to the farm-lands of Heveril. Fifteen minutes farther her answer was solved, for the lights of the manor-house shone through the trees, and she knew that they were almost home. Life had won!

They stopped before the house, and suddenly a swarm of swarthy figures appeared from all sides and surrounded the buggy, first from curiosity, and then, when they recognized Marion, with turbulent joy. A chorus of cries rent the air; they tumbled over each other in their zeal to help her alight; they ran up the steps and burst the hall door open and screamed: "Massa, Massa! Miss Marion is arrived!" They kissed her hands, and as she got out of the buggy they kissed her dress and cried their very noisy welcome. Slowly, she walked up the steps to the portico trying to smile at them and to say something to thank them

MARION MANNING

for their joyous welcome. Her lips, however, refused to frame any words. Then her father stood before her and she was in his arms, and he was leading her into the hall, where Uncle Isaac was bowing very low, with his face wreathed in smiles.

"I telegraphed," she explained, in a husky voice, "but the telegraph-man was ill; that's the reason you didn't get it. Yes, I've come to stay for a little while. Liza is coming to-morrow, but I feel rather tired now." She leant heavily on his arm, the lights began to flicker before her eyes, while the floor moved under her feet. For the first time in her life she fainted.

XIII

"It makes us or it mars us."

—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN John received Marion's telegram, telling him of her proposed visit to Heveril, he was not surprised nor perturbed, for he attached no significance to it; nor did he for one moment suspect the truth. On the whole, he was rather pleased that she had decided to go to Virginia now, as he could, therefore, remain in New York a few days longer, without feeling that she was impatiently waiting for him at home. The following morning, however, he was rudely snatched from his fool's paradise by a brief letter from Mrs. Walford which told him what had happened. At first he was staggered by the news. He had never contemplated, or rather had never allowed himself to contemplate, such a possibility, and the actual fact was a severe shock to him. For once in his life he was nonplussed and dismayed. What would be the result of this discovery? There could be no doubt about the truth of it. Mrs. Walford had written that she had seen Marion and that the latter knew everything. Nothing more had been said, though, as to how she had behaved, and whether she was upset, or angry, or what? John ground his teeth in wrath and disgust. That such a disturbance should occur just when the light of his fame was burning brightly, and when things pointed to a brilliant political success, was more than any man could stand, and he less than

MARION MANNING

others. What a fool he had been, though, to lie in such a clumsy manner to Marion about his afternoon's engagement when he might have known that it would be easy for her to find out that he had never been to the Capitol at all! "Well," he fumed, "here's the devil to pay—and where will it end? There will be scenes, tears; she may refuse to live with me; she may insist on a divorce. . . . But no, that I will not consent to." A domestic scandal would not help to make him popular or give him credit. One circumstance only gave him pleasure, and that was Marion's absence from Washington.

"It will give me time to think things over," he thought, "to decide which will be the best policy to pursue." He then quickly made up his mind to take the first train to Washington. After writing a line to Kelters to break an appointment for that morning and to postpone it till a later day in Washington, and after sending several telegrams renouncing social engagements for that evening and the next day, he was ready to start, and two hours later was on the train. His frame of mind did not improve during the journey. He was angry with himself, with Marion, with Mrs. Walford; angry with himself, only because of his own stupidity, but vexed seriously with the others. Why?—he could not have explained to his own satisfaction, but the fact remained that his future way was not clear before him, and that they were to blame for it. He chafed at the duration of the journey; he found fault with the food which was served to him in the dining-car; with the service of the porters. When he reached his destination at five o'clock, he jumped into a cab, and, giving the address to the driver, was driven rapidly to Mrs. Walford's house. He had no plans in view, only thought it advisable to obtain all the information he could as to the knowledge which

MARION MANNING

Marion had obtained. What Mrs. Walford would propose he did not know. He only hoped that she would not expect him to break with his wife and attach himself to her, because such a step would be fatal to his interests. He loved her, but he could not sacrifice himself for her, and, as in the days when Mrs. Walford was claiming the dues of obligation from him, he rather dreaded the interview which lay before him. And yet, five minutes later, when she came into the drawing-room of her house and stood before him, his stern resolves melted and he only wished to kiss her and forget the occurrence that brought him hither. She was very white, more white than usual, and her eyes had great, black circles under them. She said nothing as she came in, only looked at him with a yearning look in her eyes, the look of those whose sustenance is being taken from them. He sprang forward and took her hands in his.

"Claire," he cried, "I came at once; tell me everything!" She did not answer, but staggered slightly and would have fallen had not his arm caught her round the waist and held her up firmly. She leaned against him with shut eyes and heaving breast, and the sight of her glowing hair so close to his eyes, and of her white, transparent skin, sent the blood tingling through his veins with the tumultuous agitation which always awoke in her presence. He put his arms round her and kissed her on the lips.

"My darling, my darling!" he whispered, and she lay in his arms resistless, outwardly inanimate. But all at once she stirred and started, put her hands up against him, pushing him away from her. He would not let her go at first, but she persisted; and at last he gave way and released her. Then she walked to a chair and motioned him to sit down also. Looking at him all the while she parted her lips once or

MARION MANNING

twice, but she could not speak till she had turned her eyes away from him; then the words came.

"She came here to see Harry that last afternoon." She spoke hesitatingly at first, but as she went on, with added strength and firmness. "On her way upstairs she overheard voices in this room. She heard yours. I don't know what happened then, but she went up-stairs to Harry's nursery, and Marie afterwards told me that she looked very ill, and Harry said also that she wouldn't play. When I heard that, I made up my mind to find out how much she knew. I went to her house the next morning and forced myself in. She told me that she had heard you making love to me. She was very angry at first, but not afterwards. She—" Mrs. Walford turned to John and looked at him with eyes that were sad although not wavering. "She forgave me," she added, and then was silent. John had taken a small enamel box from the table which stood between them, and with his fidgety fingers unceasingly opened and shut the lid of it. He was looking at the little dainty Dresden figures when she stopped speaking, and did not lift his eyes. Claire went on: "She is not the child I had imagined her to be; and—she was very generous—" He raised his head, turning towards her.

"Was she?" he queried, eagerly. "What did she say; what is she going to do?"

"I don't know," she answered, with a weary note in her voice. "She did not say; but she made me realize one thing, that things can't go on as they are now. You must choose between us."

"Choose?" he stammered, but she interrupted.

"Of course, there is but one choice for you to make." He watched her breathlessly. "She is your wife; you must stand by her. Besides, I have been thinking things over. I think you owe it to her. You owe

MARION MANNING

me nothing—" He made a protesting gesture, but she stopped him. "No, you have given me a great deal when you needn't have given anything; but she deserves more. I don't know whether she will forgive you, but you must try to obtain her forgiveness. You mustn't see me again." He made another impatient movement; but she would not let him talk yet. "Oh, I shall make it easy for you by going away, and you must not oppose my going. You must think of your future, you know, and your career." There was a faint tinge of sarcasm in her voice which he did not notice. "Yes," she went on, dreamily. "It is the only thing to do; there is no other choice for you."

He got up hastily and began to pace the floor. Claire was proposing to him the only feasible thing which there remained for him to do. He was not pleased that she should propose it, and yet he realized it was the only course that was left open for him to pursue. He reasoned to himself that it would be wiser to take her at her word, and not to oppose her present wish, for he guessed that able persuasion might do much towards changing the verdict she had pronounced.

"I suppose it is," he said, at length. "She is my wife, and, as you say, I owe her something. Then, besides, I don't see what else there is for us to do." She watched him, with a faint smile playing about her lips.

"There is nothing else to do," she said, slowly. "You will go back to her and make her forgive you. Then you can plunge into politics and forget worries and trouble at home."

"Yes," he replied, standing before her and staring at the carpet with a frown. "There is a great deal to do, and I shall be very busy; a new bill to intro-

MARION MANNING

duce." He was absolutely sincere now, and for a moment forgot his listener. "Extraordinary opportunity for me, and—" He suddenly roused himself and looked at her.

"How about you?" It was the man remembering the woman; it was strength becoming aware of weakness, and selfishness recalling sacrifice. And the remembrance to her was more tragic than the forgetfulness. Her mouth trembled and she looked at him helplessly, pathetically.

"I," she stammered—"oh, I shall be all right. I shall go to Europe. I've got Harry, you know." But his vanity would not be satisfied with those words. He must wring the truth from her; find out how deeply she would miss him. He pulled up a chair close to hers, and leaned forward to take her hand in his.

"Claire," he said, "I don't know how I shall be able to live without you. My love for you hasn't grown in a day; it's of many years' standing. I don't see how I can let you go. Tell me the truth, Claire, do you want me to go?" She trembled a little and looked frightened.

"Why do you ask me that?" she said. "If you must go, isn't that enough? What is the use of thinking of things? I have decided, you have decided—that ends it."

"But does it end it?" he asked, bending closer to her. "Shall we be able to do it? The duty I mean; can you go back to your old life now, and be happy?"

"Oh, we are not discussing happiness," she cried, with a hard laugh.

"But we must think of it," he continued. "We have both got our lives to live. We don't want to wreck them."

"We should wreck them if we didn't separate," she said, under her breath. "No, John, no; don't

MARION MANNING

talk any more; don't try to move me or to change my conviction. You are forgetting yourself and your future! What would life be for you if I was on your hands? If things could go on as they were—but they can't now that she knows everything. Besides, I mustn't; really, John, really, you mustn't say any more; you must go back to her."

He bent down and kissed her hands.

"Dear, I will do as you say," he replied, with firm voice. "I will throw myself into my work; I will try to forget you." She got up hastily and walked to the window.

"I didn't mean that you were to forget me," she said, very low after a pause as she pressed her forehead against the pane of glass. "It is so hard. You don't understand. And I don't know what I am going to do, what will happen to me." He had followed her to the window.

"You?" he answered. "I thought you said that you would go abroad." She turned and faced him suddenly.

"Yes, me!" she said. "Me! And I *did* say that I would go abroad. But do you think that it is easy? To go away and never see you again? You've got your work; oh, I know that that means more to you than anything else. But I? And you choose so lightly; you decide so calmly to do your duty and go back to your wife, and leave me for always. All the love I have given you means nothing to you."

"But you told me to go!" he cried. "You chose for me!"

"Well, and even if I did," she answered, hotly; "does that mean that you have no spark of feeling in you, that you are as cold as ice, and that you can let me dictate terms to you which banish me out of your existence without rebelling at all? What is inside of you

MARION MANNING

that you can make such desperate love to me, and then let me go without a struggle—just acquiesce in what I say, and not complain or resist—not make a fight for what you want? Oh, there it is; it is because you don't want me that you let me go; it is because you have never really cared for me that you behave like this!"

"What are you talking about?" he interrupted, angrily. "You are crazy. You blame me for what you have done yourself. You are unreasonable! But, after all, what can one expect from a woman? I, for one, have given up trying to understand them!"

"Yes, I think you had better," she retorted, leaning her back against the window. "Women are too far above you for you to understand."

"They are, indeed"—he was very angry now—"and I am glad of it. I think that I can live my life far better without them, and it certainly will be a quieter one. Good-bye," he added. "You have opened my eyes to the insincerity of your sex more thoroughly than any one I have ever known," and he strode to the door.

She looked blankly at him, not realizing his purpose till he was half-way across the room. Then her eyes dilated with fear, and she ran after him, with hands held out to him beseechingly.

"John, John!" she half sobbed. "Don't go like that. Forgive me, please. I love you so much that I am beside myself. I didn't know what I was saying. I can't bear to have you go like this. I can't bear to have you go at all. You mustn't go. I was crazy to say such things; to think that you could leave me—that I could get on without you. I couldn't. I can't possibly. Do you hear, John?" She clutched at his coat. "Say something to me; turn to me; please, don't be hard on me. You know you have loved me;

MARION MANNING

you must love me a little bit still, and you can't mean to hurt me like this!" But he paid no attention to her; only tried to disengage her fingers from his coat. She fell on her knees and the tears rolled down her cheeks. "Oh, don't be hard on me!" she cried. "John, forgive me; for the sake of all that has gone between us, kiss me again. You don't know what you are doing, John—you don't, indeed. You don't understand how I shall go mad if you don't look at me." She paused a moment, but he said nothing. "If it wasn't for Harry, I'd kill myself," she went on, harshly. "You ought to have some kindness in you—some generosity. You oughtn't to stand there so coldly when I am kneeling at your feet asking you to forgive me—to say one word to me before you go away, forever!" She loosed the edge of his coat from her fingers and hid her wet face in her hands.

He turned and stared at her for a moment, then bent over her.

"Claire, I am a brute!" he said, and his voice trembled slightly. "You are right; I am selfish and hard. I didn't deserve your love. I am not good enough to have won it. Most of me is bad at the bottom. I know it now; you have made me know it; but I can't tell how long I shall remember it." He bent lower and gently kissed her hair, and she sprang to her feet and lifted her face close to his. He put his hand on her forehead, and, pushing back her fringe, looked steadily into her eyes. Then he put his arms round her and kissed her eyes and her mouth and her hair. "All the love that I have known has been yours," he murmured, low. "Good-bye! God bless you!"

XIV

"To bear is to conquer our fate."

—CAMPBELL.

IN spite of himself John was touched by the distressing scene which had just taken place, and, what was more significant, he was humbled as he had never been before. He had loved Claire, and loved her still, and the words she had spoken to him had made a vivid impression on his mind, causing him to blame himself for his cruelty and harshness to her, and to wonder whether he had acted for the best, after all. It was galling to him to recall that he had given her pain, and that while her renunciation of him had been noble, his renunciation of her had been something very ignoble. Domestic and private life, he realized, were fast approaching a degree of complexity which foretold for him no future bliss and for others no little suffering. This knowledge was unsatisfactory and distasteful, coupled as it was to a realization that in the whole long story he alone had been at fault. It was the first time that he had admitted it to himself, and that a little of the truth of what had been and was peeped out from behind the door where he had shut it in.

He walked from Mrs. Walford's house through the dimly lighted streets to his own home by a way that was not the most direct. More than once he stopped, tempted to go back and regain what he was putting away from him; but conscience—or was it weakness?—or was it selfishness?—prevented the backward step,

MARION MANNING

and he let the desire slip by him. Once back in his own house, he forgot the disturbing impulses of the previous hour, and bent himself to the task of discovering a spot of vantage-ground from which to approach his wife. After due deliberation, he decided to write to her. It would be better to apologize to her by letter, he thought, and on paper, to discover her views, than to attempt an interview. He had nothing much to say in excuse for himself; explanation by word of mouth would be very unpleasant. A letter, therefore, would be easier and more satisfactory, and would break the ice of misunderstanding as thoroughly as would be possible at first. The softening influence of Claire was over him still as he wrote, and he was consequently more direct and manly in his plea for forgiveness than he would have been otherwise. This is his letter, as he sent it finally:

“DEAR MARION,—I returned from New York this morning, and discovered the reason for your sudden departure to Heveril yesterday. It is useless for me to make an explanation as to my conduct, for I cannot deny the words you overheard, nor is it easy for me to tell you the cause that led to them. I can only say, that though I cared for her years ago, what you discovered was but a madness of this winter, and that since our marriage I have been true and loyal to you. If you can forgive me—and I pray that you will—I will not offend you again, or cause you pain knowingly. I shall not see her after this, for she is going away to live, and I would not even if she remained here; and though it may be difficult for you to trust me in the future, yet I do not despair of winning your confidence again. I write this because I feel that it would be far harder to say it, and I want you to know it now. Words would not help matters, and if you will be generous and forget what has occurred, I ask that you will tell me so in writing, so that when we meet we need not speak of it. I am sincerely grieved for the pain I have caused you, for, knowingly, I would not have hurt you, and in the future

MARION MANNING

will not do so again. If you can't forgive me now, I shall go to Heveril and speak for myself. I know that I am asking a great deal of you, and that it is for you to dictate the terms of our future intercourse, but I have learned enough of your nature in these two years of close companionship to know that you are more noble and good than any one I have ever known, and that if there is forgiveness for me, though I have wronged you most, it is at your hands that I must look for it.

"May we not start afresh, if that be possible? Otherwise, tell me what you want to do. I do not say that I claim you as my wife, but I do say, that because you are my wife, I hope for your generosity.

"I shall remain in Washington till I hear from you. If by Monday I have not received a letter, I will go to Heveril.

"You will believe what I say, will you not?—because it is all true, and if I promise never to do anything again which would cause you pain, it is a promise I intend to keep.

"JOHN MANNING."

The letter was posted that night, and it reached Marion the next morning. She had been at Heveril for a day and two nights, but until the previous afternoon she had not spoken to her father of the subject which was uppermost in her mind. She had tried to conceal her sorrow from him, but in this attempt at unselfish dissimulation she had failed signally. The Colonel knew her too well to be deceived by her brave appearance of gayety, and, from the moment he saw her, suspected that she was unhappy.

The night of her arrival, after she had recovered from her fainting spell and had gone to bed, her father came to her and sat by her bedside till she fell asleep from sheer physical fatigue, with her hand in his. Colonel Heveril had changed little in the last two years; his hair, perhaps, had grown a trifle whiter, and his step had probably lost some of its buoyancy and energy. But otherwise time and solitude had dealt gently with him, although his life had been very lonely since Mar-

MARION MANNING

ion's marriage, and he had missed her cruelly. She had so filled every chink and corner of his existence that he had been obliged, after her departure, to learn anew the art of living, without that which once had seemed an indispensable part of it. The struggle was hard; he was older by twelve years than he had been when his wife died, and less fitted to fight against separations; but the vitality and will in him were strong enough to overcome the obstacle which he would not allow to be insurmountable. So that he resumed his old life; looked after the estate; continued, in a small way, to breed thoroughbreds, which from the time, twenty years ago, when he had gone in for racing, to that very day had never succeeded in distinguishing themselves greatly, but nevertheless still interested him as deeply as at first; and received his neighbors in the hospitable fashion which had made Heveril Manor famous in that part of Virginia for over a hundred years. But if he had existed for two years, he now lived again with his daughter at his side.

He sat by her bedside until late that evening, with his eyes fixed on her white face, on her shut, quivering eyelids, noticing, with a sense of angry pain, the sad droop to her mouth which had not been there before, and the sobbing sighs that broke so frequently from her lips. He saw that she had changed, and that she had suffered; that she was suffering now. In sleep her telltale face disclosed her secrets, and her father read them plainly. The one who had come between her and him, he thought, must have been the one who had hurt her, and that he had hurt her cruelly the sad lines of suffering testified all too plainly. He had probably been unfaithful to her, the old man surmised; nothing else would have wounded her so deeply. "She would forgive a murderer and love him still," he thought, "but deception would crush her to the ground.

MARION MANNING

I should *never* have given my consent. What a brute he must be!" Before going away he bent over her and put a trembling hand, with light touch, on her forehead. "How her mother would have suffered to see her thus," he said, under his breath, as, bending low, he kissed her white cheek. She stirred in her sleep as his lips touched her, opened her eyes in half-unconsciousness, and recognized him. She smiled a sleepy, sweet smile, and put her arms up about his neck. Then she sighed and fell asleep again. The tears came into his eyes. "Ah, but I have got her back again," he murmured, as, with smiling lips, he left the room on tiptoe.

When Marion woke the next morning she looked around in wonder at the familiar, and yet lately unfamiliar, surroundings in which she found herself. She lay in her big, four-poster bed, which was placed in the middle of a large, square, low-ceilinged room. The furniture in it was massive and of old mahogany; and the big sofa and arm-chairs were covered with the same faded blue chintz which, from babyhood, she remembered. The two windows, deep-set in the thick walls of the house, were made of small, square panes of glass; over the fireplace, facing her bed, hung the pastel portrait of her mother, which, as a girl, she had loved dearly, but which, she now remembered with a pang, she had hardly missed since her marriage. She got up and looked out of the window. Below her was the red tiled floor of the portico, and between the columns she saw lawns and flower-beds and clumps of trees, and beyond them undulating fields and woodlands, through which the James River ran its course. To the left of the house, and some forty yards away from it, stood the famous oak which the first Heveril who had settled in America had planted about two hundred years ago. The trunk of it was enormous, and encircled by a wooden

MARION MANNING

bench ; near by were a rustic table and several chairs. How many times she had raced round that tree, pursued or pursuing, with the friends of her childish days! How many times she had climbed it, and, hidden in the deep foliage, had watched visitors drive up to the house and talk with her father under the portico, or sometimes even sit below her, while the tea was spread on the bark-covered table, and she heard the talk and laughter, and was wrenched by two desires, the one a fierce wish to remain undiscovered, the other a great longing for the delicious cakes which littered the table. How long ago, how long it all seemed! On the right, and opposite the driveway leading to the house, was the white wooden mounting-block, and the hitching-posts, to which sometimes as many as ten horses had been tethered. Beyond them the driveway separated, one branch turning at right angles to the stables, the other winding through fields to the gate-posts two miles beyond. This driveway was not a well-built road, gravel-strewn, but a narrow dirt road of uncertain edges, which only differed from the country roads thereabouts by the absence of ruts. Through tree-tops to the far right rose the square tower of the little stone church where she had been married. Tears came into her eyes, so that she turned away from the window and began to dress.

She wandered all over the place that day with her father. They went into the stables and the negro quarters; she shook hands with all the old servants and farm hands; she patted the head of each woolly-haired urchin, and said a kind word to every one. There was a smile on her face which deceived the simple-minded folk of the other race, and the old women said to one another: "De Missie is more beautiful dan de angels. Law me! she's de happiest crittur on earth." They went into the paddock and saw a yearling and

MARION MANNING

two mares and their foals, from all of whom the Colonel expected great things; then into the field where the cattle were, and Marion asked her father if the old cow, Flora—so she had christened her years back—was still alive, and was told that she had died only a month ago. Unreasonably that news grieved her, though she would not have believed it possible that she could suffer any more. Perhaps it was because it made her realize that the old as well as the new ties were breaking, and that she was helplessly adrift in a bewildering world. When Colonel Heveril proposed that they should walk to the little ivy-covered church, she demurred, for she could not face its memories. She also avoided the garden, and instinctively her father bent his steps away from it.

In the afternoon they retreated to the library, where Uncle Isaac had lit a small fire in the huge chimney, beside which, in a large arm-chair, the Colonel ensconced himself. Then, following old usage, Isaac knelt down before him and pulled off his boots, replacing them by black velvet slippers, which were worn with age. Marion watched this performance with listless wonder. It seemed to her incredible that her father and his old servants should still be playing their parts in life's action exactly as they had played them twenty years ago. Isaac himself looked as if Father Time had forgotten him in his journey; his hair was quite white—but then it had been white for years—and his brown face was entirely wrinkled, and his shoulders were bent and stooping, yet his walk was as brisk as it had ever been, and his teeth as white and perfect as a young man's. He wore a threadbare suit of black broadcloth, a very high, white collar, which opened in front, and a black silk tie, knotted in bow shape with long ends. Marion wondered how old he was, and compared him with sat-

MARION MANNING

isfaction to the younger generation of self-satisfied negroes.

A sudden clamor from the back of the house roused her from her reverie, and made her walk to the north window to ascertain the reason of the unusual noise. There she could not resist smiling.

"Father, come here," she said. Before the kitchen door a large group of negroes was assembled, and in the middle of it Liza, evidently just arrived from the station and a prominent figure in city clothes, stood with beaming face, trying to distribute smiles evenly on either side of her and to answer each question which was addressed to her. This, however, was a difficult undertaking, as all the party were talking, laughing, and attempting to shake her hands at the same time. Old Chloe, the cook, a red bandana on her head and a yellow checked apron on, stood nearest to her and tried to keep the other servants off.

"Get off, you children!" she was crying. "Don't make yourselves so obnoxious; don't you see dem fine clothes of Miss Liza?" Liza was dressed in black silk and wore plumes in her bonnet. "Don't you go and spot her with your dirty hands. Keep off, I say, and look at her from a distance. Ain't she grand? Lor' me, Liza, I thought ye'd nebber come back." With which she embraced her with great vigor.

"Hey; don't ye, Miss Chloe, be talking like dat," a voice cried. "I'se want to shake hands with Miss Liza, too. Well, she a fine lady now. Welcome home, Miss Liza!" and so on and so on, and cries and shrieks of laughter and digs in the ribs, and, on the outskirts of the gathering, jumps and somersaults from small black boys and girls. At this juncture Uncle Isaac was seen making his way through the little crowd, which respectfully opened as he passed through.

"Wall, now, Miss Liza," he cried, taking one of

MARION MANNING

her hands in both of his and shaking it up and down in pump-handle fashion, "I'se powerful glad to see you back. How are you? Purty well, I'd say from the looks of ye. Now, Chloe, don't she look fine?" and he leaned his head back and surveyed her with critical approbation.

"Oh, I'm very well," Liza answered (Marion had opened the window some time before and could hear every word spoken); "and I thank you all very much for the welcome you have given me. I'm glad to get back, that's the truth, and there's no place like old Virginny, I find." Here "hurrahs!" rent the air; Liza bowed again, and, escorted by Isaac and Chloe and the house-servants, entered the kitchen, while the field-hands scattered to the quarters.

Marion shut the window. "What children they are!" she sighed, as she returned to the tea-table. She was too restless, however, to remain long in one place, and her father watched her with a pathetic expression on his face as she moved about the room, first kneeling down before the bookcases in search of some well-thumbed treasure, then moving to the windows to rearrange the curtain-folds or to pull down the blinds and shut the gray light out. As the afternoon wore on, her pitiful white face grew sadder and more despairing, until Colonel Heveril could no longer stand the ordeal of watching her suffer thus silently. From his big arm-chair by the fireplace, where a few burning logs kept the chill and damp from the big room on that cheerless March day, he called to her:

"Marion, come here." She came obediently and sat down on a low stool at his side. "Marion, I want you to tell me what the trouble is," he said, at last, with a voice that trembled slightly. She looked up at him sharply.

"What trouble, father? I—" she stammered, and stopped short.

MARION MANNING

"Child, I can't help seeing," he said, very gently, as he leaned forward and put one hand on her shoulder. "You must not keep things from me. I love you better than anything in the world. Perhaps I can help you."

She pressed her hands together, and looked at him pitifully. "No one can help," she answered, low.

"What is it?" he asked, leaning back in his chair and gazing at the fire. She clasped and unclasped her hands, but said nothing. The flames from the fireplace threw a pitiful light on her drawn face and sad, tearless eyes.

"What is there to say, father?" she said, at length. "I am unhappy, but I don't want to bother you about my troubles." He did not speak, so that she went on. "John doesn't care for me. He loves another woman. I found it out the other day, but it happened a long time ago, before he married me." She spoke in short, jerky tones. She had stopped moving her hands about, only held them tightly clenched together. "He didn't love me, then. He only married me for my money. I heard him tell that woman that I didn't suspect anything; that I thought he only cared for me." Her voice was bitter as she repeated his words.

The Colonel looked at her with wet eyes. "My child, my child," he murmured.

"Oh, you mustn't pity me," she cried. "I couldn't expect to live on as happy as I was forever. It wouldn't have been fair. Every one has to be unhappy—only"—she stared at the fire—"only, I don't know what to do." There was a silence. "Father, it may have been partly my fault," she continued. "I was like a child with him, not a woman. I didn't understand him at all. My love bored him." A hot blush flooded her face. "I think probably he would have liked me better if I hadn't cared so much. But how was I to

MARION MANNING

know, and how could I tell that all he said was untrue! And that other woman told me that I hadn't *cared enough*! I am all bewildered now. I haven't seen him since I discovered this. I wanted to get away from him to think, and to decide things. He is in New York now. I don't know when he will return to Washington."

Colonel Heveril looked at her wistfully and moved forward in his chair to put one old wrinkled hand on her soft white ones. "I would have gone to my grave to spare you this, my little girl," he said. "God knows, I love you dearly, and it cuts me to the quick to see you suffer. Oh! you were too good for him. I should have realized it at the time."

"Don't say that, father," she answered, quickly. "You could have done nothing. Only tell me what to do now."

He straightened himself up and hesitated a moment, and then spoke more sharply. "Do you love him still?"

Marion flushed and trembled. "Father, I don't know. At times I hate him, and at times I love him. This ought to have killed all my love, and when I don't hate him I despise myself. To be treated as he has treated me, to be trampled on and humiliated, to have been deceived for two years! Oh! he is a bad man to have done it—but, oh! I can't answer that question, father."

The Colonel rose from his chair and began to pace the room. His brows were knit angrily, and he mumbled to himself as he walked. "He deserves to be shot!" he said, at last, under his breath. "If he were here I should kill him!"

Marion sprang up, and, running to him, clasped his arm tightly with her strong fingers. "Father, what are you saying? How dare you talk like that?" Her

MARION MANNING

eyes were flashing. "He is my husband—my husband, don't forget; if you killed him you would kill me, too. Oh yes, I care for him still, and I am a poor, worthless woman, with no pride or self-respect, and I have cared more than she thought—far, far more—so much that this will kill me, for I can't live with this awful truth staring me in the face. But, remember, you must never do him any harm—never! It would make me hate you if you did."

Colonel Heveril passed one hand over his eyes, and then replied, unsteadily: "Marion, you are mad with grief, but I was mad, too, for a moment; only, child, never say that again. You don't realize what your words mean. I have nothing but you, Marion—nothing." His eyes helplessly sought the ground. She had released his arm and stood before him, looking at him with hopeless despair.

"Father," she said, at last, "I have been so hurt that it has made me inhuman. I don't know if I shall ever get over it. Now I am not responsible, and it is useless holding me responsible for what I say. You have never suffered as I am suffering now. You can't understand."

"My dear," he answered, gently, "when your mother died, half of me died, too, and is buried with her. I have suffered, too, and I *do* understand."

"But this is worse," she cried. "If he were dead it would be much better, and *all* of me has died now. It will never come alive again. I believed in him; he betrayed me. I believed in God; He allowed this to be; I can believe in nothing now—nothing. There is no good in the world, no love, no anything. I shall be hard now, and if I make other people suffer, why, it won't be my fault, but theirs, who did this. No, don't say any more. I shall get over caring for him, I promise you. You needn't worry. It may be difficult at first,

MARION MANNING

but I'll succeed—and then we'll see." The old man came up to her and put his shaking hands on her shoulders.

"Marion, my darling, because you are hurt, you must not hurt others, too," he said, with infinite tenderness in his voice. "You are bruised and crushed now, but you have a life to live, you have a future before you from which you cannot escape. Don't try to escape it; meet it squarely and bravely." He put his arms round her, and pressed her to him. "My darling, I want to comfort you, to help you, not to scold or preach."

Her eyes were quite dry as she turned them to him, but there was a pathos indescribable in them that was more touching than any tears. Slight and young, and yet well learned in sorrow, she was like a young tree whose first spring leaves have been blighted by frost. All the joy of youth, all the joy of life, all the energy and hope had left her face, and were replaced by the sadness of hard knowledge, and by the hopelessness of despair.

"Father," she said, slowly and haltingly, as if speech were an effort and thoughts difficult of expression. "It's as if I were in a dark room, from which I can't find the way out. I don't know where to turn, and that's why I say things which hurt. But you know. You must help me to see again—won't you, father? Look after me for a little while now, as if I were your little girl again." She lifted her face to be kissed, and he kissed it hurriedly, and then turned away, because he did not want her to see the tears in his eyes.

XV

"Like, but oh, how different!"

—WORDSWORTH.

MARION MANNING'S life up to that fatal March day in Washington had been one continuous stretch of unbroken illusions and perfect happiness. Her mother's death was the only sorrow she had known, and that had happened so long ago that she remembered it only as a sharp pain, felt but not understood, at a time when pains were to her childish mind more the outward expression of physical suffering than the reflection of inward sorrowing. As if a knife had cut her, she had sobbed then, with the agony of an unknown grief, and with the unconscious rebellion of a child against loss and unjust cruelty. Then the sharpness of the pain had subsided, and after a while only a memory of unexplained sadness had remained. The years of her childhood and girlhood at Heveril had followed each other in a long chain of joyful links, and events, impressions, and dreams were all bright-colored with the brush of her fanciful imagination. Long, hot summer days, when the hay and wheat, ochre colored, were reaped and stacked on huge wagons, and she, perched on the highest of them all, rode triumphantly through the shorn fields to the farm buildings; autumn days, when the air was cool and invigorating and the leaves on the trees were beginning to turn, and she on her pony would gallop over the soft earth of the fields, or on the sandy soil, out of

MARION MANNING

which the pines reared their hardy strength, while the wind whistled in her ears and blew the hair off her forehead, making it flutter out behind her in a brown mass of untidy curls; Christmas Day in the old village church, decorated with red berries and green, and she in the ecstasy of religious fervor, unable to join in the singing of "Hark! the herald angels sing," because her voice was too husky and the tears were too near her eyes, standing close, close to her father, with her hand in his; the Colonel's birthday, when all the neighbors for more than twenty miles round rode to Heveril to offer their congratulations, and the big table was spread for lunch in the oak library and toasts were drunk, and in the evening Uncle Isaac and Aunt Liza and all the servants would assemble under the portico to wish the master long life and happiness; and then the negro melodies, sad and full of longings, or wildly boisterous, would keep the night awake for many hours. Uneventful, happy days they were, gliding one into the other with noiseless and rapid sequence. With the simple joys and with the years the ideals had grown, and the enthusiasms and aspirations of childhood had gathered force from the passing seasons. Marion's girlhood was the prelude to the life that followed, to the realized ideals, and to the satisfied aspirations. The soft, dreamy look which had crept into her eyes with the first wonder of wakening imagination had never left them, only become more dreamy, more inspired, more love-lit. Her mouth had retained its sensitive curves, her face its mobility and its variableness. The inherent strength of her character only had been less apparent than before. It seemed as if she had been content to sacrifice her individuality, her opinions, her will, to the personality that dominated her. But one motive had actuated her life after her marriage,

MARION MANNING

to work for her husband's career and for her husband's happiness! She had studied politics, to keep in touch with his interests; she had read, to discuss the books with him; she had made herself attractive and agreeable in society, to do him honor; she had loved, honored, and obeyed him in the deepest sense of all three words. But, she had sunk her personality in his. Her love for him had made her forget herself, made her forget her own gifts and talents, and made her commit the fatal mistakes of being only a reflected adaptation of himself, and of showing him too undisguisedly the adoration which she bestowed on him; so that, instead of continually finding new points of interest in her character, instead of being astonished by new phases of mental development and piqued by opposing opinions, he had become bored by the affection she lavished on him. She had become a fanatic in loving, and by so doing had injured her own cause. Not that John had ever encouraged her individuality. On the contrary, his domineering mind had ignored her view and effaced it; and, loving him as she did, she had fought not for herself, but had surrendered what was in her to him. It was what he had planned that she should do, and yet if she had not conformed to his desire, but had struggled for the maintenance of her side of the question, he would have tired of her far less early. She had remained a child to him, a trustful, unconscious child, so that the maturity and knowledge of Mrs. Walford had filled the gap which Marion did not know to be there.

Now realization had come, and the suffering which must inevitably result. She was a brave woman, however, above all, and after the first shock had passed she faced facts squarely, and exerted all her energies to surmount the obstacles which threatened her. But the readjustment of one's life after it has been shaken

MARION MANNING

and disturbed cannot be other than slow and gradual; and Marion found this out as the days passed, and the light for which she struggled seemed farther off than it had been.

After due deliberation she made up her mind to return home, on the condition that Colonel Heveril should spend part of the year with her. He agreed to this arrangement and John accepted the proposal with alacrity, so that three days later she and her father went to Washington, and the crisis in their lives became a thing of the past. Mrs. Walford had gone, and the world, though it might have suspected, knew nothing of the dark waters which had almost engulfed two in their midst.

And Marion began to learn her new *rôle*, and play the part she assigned to herself. What she had previously scorned she now sought humbly to excel in. Not only to the outside world did she dissemble, but to her husband also, for she never let him see the depth of the injury she had received. Her pride, which, where he was concerned, had been dormant, revived; her father's straightforward advice did the rest. He had illustrated his counsel by homely words:

"There is an old saying, my dear," he had told her, "which says that when people lose their teeth they must either get false ones or leave holes which the world will see. That is like life; when we lose our beliefs, or idols, we must either hide the empty places by a semblance or let every one see what we have lost."

This was said at Heveril, in the last conversation they had on future plans.

"It is hard work for a father to advise duplicity to his daughter," he had continued; but she had interrupted:

"Oh no, you are right; it is the only possible thing to do."

MARION MANNING

And she did it—to society and to her friends. She smiled and laughed as she had previously, and as hostess, by her husband's side, she received as graciously as before. Only an observer whom love had made keen would have noticed a difference, because there was a difference—a subtle change she could not hide; and it lay somewhere, far back, in her eyes; but she was unconscious of it herself, and deceived the world.

John did not attempt to enter deeply into a psychological explanation of her conduct to society and to him; he was glad to shirk the logical deduction of his action and to take advantage of her apparent composure. The only words he had spoken to her with reference to what had happened were those with which he had greeted her on her return to Washington with her father.

"Some day," he had said, low, "I will show you how deeply I thank you."

She had received this admission quietly, without sign of emotion, and the incident had closed.

The first week of their intercourse was trying to both of them, but John soon surmounted the uncomfortable feeling of conscious wrong done, which at first had oppressed him in her presence, and arose from the catastrophe which had threatened him, inwardly strengthened in his belief that the fates which had smiled on him at his birth would be true to him to the end. His conduct to her was all that it should be; he was tactful and unobtrusive, deferential, too, but not affectionate.

Meanwhile he was deeply engrossed in politics, devoting his entire energy to the advocacy of the Shipping bill. The second conference which he had with Kellers in Washington was most satisfactory, and as time went on he discovered that while the opposition to the bill would be fierce, and even bitter, the best men

MARION MANNING

of his party were in favor of it. More than once he secretly congratulated himself on the opportunity which had come to him, by the support of a bill which was nationally beneficial, but through which he could win a victor's spoils undiscovered. The victor's spoils for him were not only the prospect of money-making, but the reward which would come to him by his constituents' gratitude and by his personal political success. It was natural, therefore, in view of his public interests, that domestic troubles should look small in his eyes, and that he should seek to evade any friction which might result in explanations or in distressing scenes.

Marion seconded him in this desire, though from a different motive, and she surmounted alone the difficulties which surrounded her. At first she tried to banish all ulterior thoughts from her mind, tried to forget that a future was coming, and endeavored to live entirely in the present; sought distraction at every corner, and avoided all occasions which could arouse emotion or feeling. She worked so hard all day to accomplish this result that at night she slept the dreamless sleep of physical exhaustion. But after a time her brain refused to relinquish its natural functions, and she plied herself with questions to which answers were very difficult to find. What had brought this about? Had she failed in this respect or that? Could she have won and kept his affection if she had acted differently? She lived her life over from babyhood days, recalling the incidents of her childhood, trying to trace their influence on her future life, listening again to the words of advice, to the religious and philosophical training she had received, wondering whether her ideals had not wrongly been allowed to grow. She recalled her first meeting with him, and the later ones, till her marriage-day had made his life part of hers, or,

MARION MANNING

to speak more truthfully, her life part of his. She remembered each word he had spoken at those momentous interviews; she rehearsed their conversations, his gestures, the signs of emotion which he had manifested. And then she dissected his character, and, with the clear light of day thrown upon her observations, she understood many of his motives and his actions which, up to now, she had not fathomed. By questioning and probing she had hoped to piece together and readjust the fragments of her past happiness which were lying loosely scattered round her. But she failed in her object, and only caused herself more suffering by tearing further apart still the veil that had held them together. She did not think that John's feelings towards her would ever change, and even if they did it would make no difference to her, because she could not believe him again. That was where the worst sting lay; her faith had gone, was broken irrevocably. At first she had only thought of what he had done to her—then the memory of Houghton, Mrs. Walford, his servant in Persia, came back to her mind vividly, and became ugly, staring blots on her vision. Then she despised him—and to love and despise was torture that she had never dreamed of facing. In those dark hours, darker than those over which death has thrown its pitiless shadow, she surrendered herself to her despair, and longed passionately to throw away, as useless, the life which she was forced to lead. For not only had joy been taken from her, but all reasons for living—day in, day out, she must sit and watch beside the man she had loved, and loved still, refraining from any expression of feeling, knowing that she was never again to hear any words of love from his lips, trying to deaden in herself what had been scorned by him, but had been her whole life up to that time. Colonel Heveril was a great comfort to her during her

MARION MANNING

season of trial, and his wordless sympathy often brought relieving tears to her dry eyes.

As the weeks passed other moods came to her, sadder than the rebellious, unhappy ones, moods of deadly apathy and weary acceptance of destiny; and these troubled her father more than the others, for they came more and more frequently, and lasted longer. But he never remonstrated nor interfered, only lavished his love upon her.

It was the year of the long session. Congress was not expected to adjourn till July or August. In May the Shipping bill was introduced and was referred to a committee, from which it was not to emerge till the following winter session. In June, Colonel Heveril returned to Virginia, where Marion paid him several visits, and towards the end of July the Mannings went to New Bristol.

Cousin Electa met them at the station on their arrival, and became once more a part of their life. She was almost pink with joy—if such a youthful color could be applied to the flush which covered her thin, yellow cheeks—at their approach, and her greeting was unusually demonstrative.

“We’re pleased to see you back, Cousin John, after your distinguished services to your country; and you, Cousin Marion—I’m heartily glad to see you. The carriage is here and the house is in order.”

Marion clung to Miss Electa all the afternoon, as if she were afraid of being left alone or in the company of her husband, for it was hard for her to return to the place where she had been so happy, and she dreaded the possibility of breaking down and of losing her self-control.

And Miss Electa garrulously descanted on the doings of New Bristol during their absence, recounting all the gossip of the place, clerical and literary for the most

MARION MANNING

part—of the pride taken by her in John's political success, of the neighbors' opinions of him.

"All flattering, Cousin John, you may be sure, though by flattering I mean truthful, of course. As the Lord knows, I am not a proud woman; but there's no harm in being gratified when your cousin is praised. They always ask me, when they see me, 'How's the Honorable John?'—I always call you that. It didn't seem right, somehow, to speak of you as 'My cousin John,' as I used to; so I hit on 'My cousin the Honorable John.' It sounded better, and it took, Cousin John—it did indeed."

John laughed aloud, and Marion smiled furtively.

"Dear Cousin Electa," she said, "you're just the same as ever."

After dinner the Mannings walked with her to the door of her little house, and then went back to their own home. Marion was constrained and ill at ease, for John had been unusually considerate and thoughtful of her all day, and talked to her now, although about different matters, with a softer inflection to his voice than she had heard for many months. Had his boyhood's home compelled the far-off memories of guileless childhood and shed a kindly influence over his thoughts and actions? They reached the house, but Marion lingered on the porch and seemed unwilling to go in-doors. Presently John emerged from the library, where he had gone for a cigarette, and sat down on one of the benches near the door. He smoked in silence for a long time, then threw the unfinished cigarette away, brusquely rose from his seat, and walked into the garden by the side of the house. There he paced to and fro, for what seemed to Marion an incredibly long time, and she watched his dark form move restlessly among the black shadows, while a wondering thrill as to what his thoughts might be passed

MARION MANNING

over her. She sat as if turned to stone, intent on the comings and goings of the man who was now almost a stranger to her—and who had been so much! Her customary apathy deserted her when he came back to her, and she felt herself trembling.

He sat down beside her, silently.

"I've a curious spell on me to-night," he said, suddenly. "I have been living over again all the years I spent here when I was a boy. What fun I had, and, by George! what a lot of things I believed in then!" He laughed shortly, then was silent; after a while he went on: "Have you ever noticed how different things seem at night—and under the stars? The world, and all of us in it, and politics and money-making and the rest! And have you also noticed that the stars look farther away from us when we get older than they did, and more incomprehensible? Wordsworth caught it right:

"'Turn wheresoe'er I may, by night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more!'

That's about the gist of it. We don't see as well when we grow older—or, perhaps, we see better; I wonder which it is!"

He laughed again, cynically. Marion could not speak; his words held her as by a spell.

"Do you want me to quote some more? I learned that ode when I was twelve, and declaimed it here, in the school, to the admiration of all my classmates and teachers.

"'But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence . . . '"

MARION MANNING

He stopped suddenly. "Marion, it's good philosophy," he went on, "but it won't hold. It's all very well to have been near to things when you were young, but if when you're old you're far away, the recollection doesn't help you. Marion," he bent nearer to her, "we're living a rotten life. Can't we make it any better? Can't you believe in me again?"

She was troubled, thrilled by the fascination of his voice, and yet doubtful of his sincerity. "I don't know," she answered, under her breath, "I don't feel as if I could trust any one now." She got up. "I am afraid of you—I am afraid of myself."

He rose also, and put his hand on her arm. "You must not be afraid of me, dear," he said, low. His touch made her tremble, and she lifted tear-stained eyes to his face. The light through the open door fell on him—her face was in shadow.

"Oh, John!" she half sobbed—then was gone into the house, to her own room up-stairs.

And so it ended, and later she despised herself for momentary weakness. And the old order of things reigned again. But in those summer days her love dwindled, and with it her interest in the world about her and the people in it. She had forgiven, but she knew him too well now to keep on caring. Her ideal had been shattered, and it could not be pieced together. The fits of apathy crept over her, stealthily gaining ground, for there was little semblance to keep up in New Bristol, and most of the time she moved about as in a trance. She became more silent, and sometimes would sit still for hours without uttering a single word. And at those times John would get irritated, and would reproach her for moroseness and ill-temper. But his scolding affected her little. She listened to him as if she did not hear, and then would turn away without emotion. She rarely cried; since

MARION MANNING

that first evening she seemed to be untouched by his presence.

Her listless and tired eyes alone were pathetically moving, and even Miss Electa was troubled by their expression. Liza openly expressed her anxiety.

"Dearie me, Miss Marion; what's the matter with you? You've no life left in you. I'se afraid it was the heat in Washington that sort of knocked you up; think I shall speak to Massa Manning about you, and advise him to take you to de mountains."

"Liza, you'll do no such thing," her young mistress retorted, with something of her former spirit. But Liza was disobedient and informed John that:

"Miss Marion, she's in no condition to stay in dis here place. Don't you see her pale cheeks and her eyes? There's no fire in them now. In my opinion she ought to go away, high up, where it's cool." Liza carried the day, and Marion went away to the mountains, escorted by Miss Electa and her faithful attendant. John, in a very cross frame of mind, was left in New Bristol, where local affairs kept him busy, Miss Electa, before leaving, having expressed herself to him, in her usual frank manner:

"Cousin John, I consider it my duty to tell you that there's something wrong with that young wife of yours. She's a changed person since last year, and I cannot account for it. She doesn't look happy, somehow. Something must be preying on her mind. Now what do you think it is?" Miss Electa was standing before John's writing-table in the library, holding her scissors in one hand and a red-flannel petticoat in the other. She looked concerned and puzzled, and, as she spoke, scrutinized his face with anxious curiosity.

"Dear me, doesn't she look well?" John answered, not looking up from his desk, and continuing his writ-

MARION MANNING

ing. "You must look after her in the mountains. It's probably the heat that's hurt her."

"Well, I must say!" Miss Electa exclaimed, with an angry frown; "you don't seem to take much interest. The heat? Lord bless us! The heat's no more to do with her looks than it has with making me thin. Gracious me, isn't she your wife? You don't seem to care at all. I hope that you have not been making her unhappy." Miss Electa's voice had been gaining strength as she went on, and her face got red from the vehemence of her indignation.

"Electa, you are really forgetting yourself"—John had laid his pen down, and spoke in a hard, concise voice—"and I have some work to do."

She stalked out of the room in righteous anger. He kept his self-control till she had gone.

XVI

*"Knowing that nature never did betray
The heart that loved her."*

—WORDSWORTH.

IT was in the mountains on a certain Saturday afternoon in the beginning of September. John was expected that day from New Bristol, and was to spend Sunday and Monday with his wife and cousin at the Wadnach Inn, on Lake Wadnach, where they had been staying for the last three weeks.

About three o'clock Marion escaped from the hotel, and from her devoted but somewhat importunate cousin, and with a book in hand ran to the boat-house. A few minutes later she was rowing across the sunny sheet of water to the narrows which connected it with the larger part of the lake, which was hidden from the hotel windows. Her intention was to seek a sheltered nook under overhanging trees by the water's edge, and there to read and while the afternoon hours slowly away.

Dense woods surrounded the lake, and away from the glaring and very modern hotel the wildness of the untrampled forests seemed limitless. On the north lay low lands densely covered with woods, behind which ridges of softly edged green hills rose slowly, and almost shyly, as if afraid to uplift their lowly height before the mountains facing them. These, a short and serrated chain, reared their peaks, pine-clad or bare rocks, to the south, far enough away to

MARION MANNING

catch the splendors of the afternoon sun and to reflect them on the little stretch of blue through rose-tinted and purple lights. In the narrows through which the boat glided, steered by skilful hands, the water-lilies brushed their cup-like flowers and green leaves against its prow and sides, making a regretful, swashing sound, as they remained behind to raise their bent heads and their bruised beauty. Then the outlet was passed, and the boat reached the quiet, wild part of the lake. Marion, relaxing her labors, skirted the fringed bank of the north edge of the lake till she came to a spot where an unperceived snag made her halt suddenly. She looked round. There was shade here, and it was cool and inviting. A little trail led from the bank back into the densely green woods—a log half under water, half on ground, seemed a very natural breakwater for her boat. A couple of bull-frogs croaked in noisy rebellion against her intrusive coming and splashed into the water with sudden great fear; then, when sufficient time had elapsed to insure a certain kind of safety, they cautiously rose from their transparent hiding-place, resumed their old, appropriated vantage ground, and surveyed the new-comer boldly. A few birds twittered in the foliage; the branches hung their leafy green over the water, almost touching it in some places, and through their loop-holes of dark-green the water shone, glowing without a ripple. Marion took her hat off and fanned herself with it, then she lifted the book from the bottom of the boat, lazily opened it and bent her eyes to it. But she raised them after a moment and stared, instead, at the green water.

It was a long, long time since she had been alone with nature—in close communion with its charm, to her so all-enthraling. For many months, as likely to give her pain, she had thrown her simplicity and love

MARION MANNING

of the woods far from her, for the lights and shadows of the earth's making were too suggestive of the hopes and disappointments of life's doing for her willingly to court their magnetic influence. In activity there was a soporific power which made existence a possible thing and gave no leisure for idle dreams and worse than useless tears. Now, however, the desire for solitude counterbalanced all dread of it, and she lost herself in a dream in which there was no bitterness, but only a wistful sadness which tinged it with gray rather than with joyful coloring. For she had dreamed of all things, longed for all things, and for a brief while had held them in her grasp, till they had changed to chaff. For months she had held that, also, fast in her trembling hands till her hold on it had relaxed; now it was sifting slowly through her opened fingers. She watched the gnats and flies skim over the water; flimsy, ephemeral creatures, without thought or knowledge, and yet, in an untoward way, the antitype of humanity; of a day and fleeting, skimming and sometimes plunging deeply into life's waters, but continuing its course till natural night ends it; for do we not rub up against fellow-mortals though our wings may be broken or bruised, and still they and we keep on as we have been bidden? Marion looked up, and through the leaves sought for the mountains in the far distance, but they were blurred by sunlight and too remote for any comfort. And yet she looked at them, because they were high above her and great, and she felt that after weary climbing the summit would be dizzily far above the world and its pettiness and trouble—nearer a place she had believed in and thought much of once, and then doubted. For in life a something far off and ineffable should keep a struggling mortality on its feet. Near things had no value; only an impossible distance could suf-

MARION MANNING

fice to her. But the hot haze from the lake made her turn her eyes away again and realize, with a pang, the long plodding, and the hard, hot journey which the attainment of that distance would entail. She turned to the woods—green, with dancing sunlight playing through the high tree branches and the low-growing shrubs. The earth was dark-brown and looked elastic. The birds enticed her, too. She pushed her boat as near the land as she could, then sprang on shore, and made it fast to the protecting log, and started off on the little trail through the quiet woods. She walked a long way over pine-needles, under fir-trees whose clean scent filled the air, through damp, swampy places where the ferns and bracken grew thick, and where decaying logs lay scattered about, lichen and moss covered, in every stage of dissolution. There were wild flowers, too, bushes covered with red berries, and in some places inviting raspberries and blueberries. A little brook trickled through stony pathways every now and then. Once more Marion was a child of nature; far from civilization, in a great wilderness of beauty, she drank in all its sounds and perfumes and gloated over her solitary enjoyment of them. At last she came to a place where she halted with a sensation of keen pleasure. It was an uncovered spot on the side of the rising hill, and the view which met her eyes was worth more than a moment's survey. At her feet, a mile off, lay the lake, deep blue now, and shimmering before her towered the mountain range of the Faltanac. The sun was a red ball of fire in the west, half-way up the sky from the tree-topped horizon, which in the distance seemed the apex of limitless forests of entangled growth of all shades of green—emerald, olive, jade-colored—all growing darker and more gloomy as the glowing orb bent its course rapidly downward. The mountains were

MARION MANNING

boldly outlined now, and violet-shaded, casting an amethyst tinge over the quiet lake in which they mirrored themselves.

Marion clasped her hands and her eyes filled with sudden tears. All the beauty that was before her touched and stirred her; she felt its vital force, its sympathy, and she was troubled by the largeness and the grandeur which confronted her. She wondered whether the mountains knew the secrets of all things—if, from their haughty splendor, they deigned to look upon the sorrows and the struggles on the lowly earth. Could they not, by some magic herb of their own creating, cure the wounds which a low level made possible? As a child, she used to think that beyond the mountains God lived, and that the awe which she had always felt in their presence was in such wise to be explained. Once, as a little thing in the Virginia mountains, having escaped for a moment from her nurse, and being filled with longing for the mother who had but shortly left her, she had fallen on her knees before the mountains facing her, and, putting her hands together, had said: "Dear God, don't keep her there always; I want her back." Lately, the beliefs of childhood had been passing from her; the faith she had worshipped had gone too, and her joys and her ideals. This world had treated her but ill; she did not hope for much from another. Yet now the mystery of childhood was creeping slowly back to her, and the large tears that filled her eyes were the result of sudden recollection, mingled with her instinctive feeling for the beauties of nature. She wished that she was a child once again, a happy, believing child, with love surrounding her, and Heaven near and real to her. But those desires passed, for she was a woman who had suffered, and her thoughts returned to the present.

"If he had known, I don't think he could have done

MARION MANNING

it!" she reflected. "It hurt so much more than he probably thought it would. And the pain has lasted such a long time. Only, I don't think I care as much now. I am getting hard, getting not to mind things!" She put her hands out and gazed at the mountains. Then they fell back to her side. Beside her, on the knoll where she was standing, a pine-tree reared its great, solitary height. It must have withstood many storms and sharp winds, for it still kept its lonely vigil on the spot it had marked out for itself. Marion went up to it and leaned against its hard bark, feeling a sympathy coming from its closeness and strength which the far mountains could not give. To her, then, the world seemed but a mere uncertain part of a remote future, for she was alone with the works which a greater power than man's had made. Suddenly she knelt down, leaned her head against the friendly tree, and stared at the mountains. They were rose-colored now, and glowing with a light that was almost unearthly.

"Wilt thou help me, O God, who art in the mountains?" she said, low, "and give me back something of what I have lost? I am so hopeless about everything, there is nothing left to look forward to." Did the God in the mountains hear her prayer? She shut her eyes, and imperceptibly a strange peace came into her; the rebellious thoughts passed, and she saw a future where the light of day was clear once more and beautiful. A slow smile crept over her sad face.

Suddenly a remembrance of time seized on her, and she started to her feet. The afternoon was wearing rapidly away, and the woods behind her looked gloomy and dark. She hurried down the trail, but she did not pause this time beside the brooks or the way-side flowers. After a while a sense of the unfamiliar stole over her, and she looked about, not recognizing her surroundings. She should have reached the lake by

MARION MANNING

that time, but there was no water in sight. A sudden fear came to her. A damp chilliness was emanating from the dark earth; through the trees above the sky looked gray and very distant, the rays of the sun had disappeared. She stopped and put her hand up to her face. Where was she? What had happened? It would get dark soon; why couldn't she see the lake yet? She must be on the right path; it wasn't possible that she was lost. She ran on, vividly realizing her situation, her loneliness in the woods, her distance from any habitation, with twilight nearing quickly and the night approaching! "Oh, what shall I do?" she cried, while her breath came and went fast. She had never before known what fright really was, but she knew it now. For, in the dark, how could she find her way; might she not unconsciously be venturing farther and farther from the haunts of men, into a wilderness where none could find her? For no one knew where she had gone, and even her little boat was hidden out of sight. The forests were almost limitless; they might search for days before they found her, and meanwhile: she trembled, but stumbled on. "Where am I? Where am I?" she cried. "Oh, some one help!" But help seemed very far from her then, and the twilight deepened. She glanced fearfully about her as she ran—at the fearful shadows which were forming, at the fallen logs, which looked like crouching monsters to her now; she heard unnatural, curious sounds emerging from the dimness; she was alive to all the unreality and horror of her surroundings. For she was hopelessly terror-stricken, and, for the moment, physical fear surmounted all other sufferings and made them seem small and insignificant. All at once she saw a clearing ahead. She caught her breath hard, went a step farther, then started back. Before her, on a bare spot of earth, a lonely pine-tree stood solitary.

MARION MANNING

She had made a circle and returned to the same place.

But in forty minutes all had changed. The sun had sunk below the horizon; only a bloody red streak marked the place where it had gone. The forests below looked black and impenetrable; the mountains were deep indigo; on the highest peaks only a faint line of pink remained. The lake looked far away and very deep. It seemed as if she were on the outskirts of all things, fronting that which is immeasurable, standing with her back against a maze of horrors. The return to the grass knoll had brought her no comfort. She felt that she could never face those dim-lit forest-paths again, for the monster shapes would surely loom up before her and crush her by their great weight. She shuddered, and touched the tree, pressing herself against what was now her only support. She did not think clearly, or reason would have dictated to her another search for the right path. As it was, she remained motionless, as if turned to stone, and slowly the twilight lengthened; the branches rustled and cracked; the light faded on the mountaintops. Suddenly a figure emerged from the woods, and Marion's startled gaze recognized her husband. She looked at him stupidly for a moment, then, with a cry, rushed up to him and threw herself into his arms.

"John, John!" Everything was forgotten, save that he was there, and that he had found her. The rest mattered nothing. He looked down at her fair head almost with passion in his eyes. It was the first time for many months that he had held her in his arms, and the sensation was bewildering. He lifted her head, looked for a long time into her face, then bent and kissed her on the lips. It seemed then as though forgetfulness had thrown its dust over her mind, and that the present had banished all remembrance of the

MARION MANNING

past, for a slow smile passed over her face, like a sudden streak of sunlight over the stormy waters of a wood-girt lake.

"Oh, I am so glad that you are here!" she cried. Then, she remembered. Slowly she disengaged herself from his arms, and stood before him white and very grave. "I was so frightened," she explained, slowly. "I thought I was lost, and that no one could find me; but you, how did you come here?"

He smiled. "I arrived at the hotel at four, and was told that you had gone rowing in this direction. So I followed you, discovered your boat, walked up the trail, and here I am. Not difficult, was it?"

But she only answered, "We must go home now."

"Marion," he said, gruffly, seizing her hands, "how cold you are! Do you hate me?"

"No," she answered, bravely. "I used to love you. I can never hate you, but—"

"You don't care any more," he supplemented, with a little strained laugh.

She looked at him with wide-opened, hard eyes. "What does it matter?" she said.

He turned from her with a muttered oath.

That was the last time that the passionate side of her nature responded to his touch, and before long he lost all real interest in her eyes. For a time a fierce desire to force her love back, to awaken it again, to obtain his old power over her, was very strong upon him. But deliberately to court and create a love in which respect cannot lie was more than even John could do; and, besides, the labor would have been too arduous to repay for the pleasure which he would receive by the accomplishment of it. Then, it is doubtful whether Marion could have been won back, for the time had passed for any true reconciliation between them.

MARION MANNING

The autumn months crawled by, and December found them again in Washington. There John plunged once more deeply into politics; and amusement, frivolous gayety and the like, replaced for Marion much that had gone before.

"She has come down from her high horse," Sir James Leverich said to himself, as he watched her at a ball one night. "I hope, though, she didn't have too ugly a fall."

XVII

*Why, then the world 's mine oyster,
Which I with sword will open."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE day had come when John was to make his speech in favor of the Shipping bill, and when the partisans of the measure hoped to obtain a vote on it in the House of Representatives. The House met at twelve, but it was not expected that the Shipping bill would be in order until after two o'clock. By that time the galleries were filling rapidly, and Mrs. Caring and Marion, when they arrived at a quarter past two, found the Members' gallery already quite crowded. They succeeded, however, in getting two places in the Speaker's seat, which faced the Republican side of the House.

"Oh, this is delightful," Mrs. Caring whispered; "we shall be able to see John's face when he speaks. Aren't you excited, my dear?"

Marion smiled. "I suppose I am," she answered. "Look, there's Selden, of North Carolina, who has just come in. Do you see him? That tall man, with a long, white mustache. He's the Democratic leader, you know."

"Is he?" Mrs. Caring rejoined, putting up her lorgnette. "How interesting. Do point out some of the others, too. You know I don't often come here; I generally go to the Senate. Who is that funny little man in brown walking down the aisle?"

MARION MANNING

"I don't know," Marion replied; "but there is Curtin, of Minnesota, standing before the clerk's desk. He is very clever, they say. I believe he is going to speak to-day, too."

"Who is the man talking now?" Mrs. Caring continued; "and what is he talking about?" But no one seemed to know or care. He was a member on the Democratic side of the House, who stood behind a desk littered with papers, and talked in an excited tone of voice, while one arm gesticulated violently. His eloquence, however, seemed wasted, for only one or two people looked at him or appeared to be interested in his oration. All around him there was a ceaseless hum of low conversation; members walked in and out; messengers hurried to and fro; several Congressmen, with hard work written on their faces, read newspapers; the Speaker leaned back in his chair and indolently surveyed the House, while his fingers played with the ivory gavel on the table. John Manning sat at his desk, in deep conversation with two or three members who had crowded round him.

"I wonder when he is going to begin?" Mrs. Caring said; "I am getting quite nervous; aren't you?"

Marion did not answer. She was cool and collected. What was going to happen could not affect her in the least. She supposed that John would speak well; he usually did. She had perfect confidence in his intellectual abilities, and she knew that whether he carried his bill through or not, his speech would be forcible and clever. She was sure to receive compliments on it afterwards, which she would acknowledge with formal smiles and phrases. She had come to-day because she considered it her duty; because she desired, above all things, to avoid any occasion which would set people talking, and also because she was undoubtedly interested in politics, and particularly

MARION MANNING

in the Shipping bill, for she had heard all the reasons in favor of it, and they had struck her as sound and convincing.

But something was happening on the floor. The Speaker was leaning forward in his chair; the Democratic gentleman was still talking loudly, but a Republican member was endeavoring to interrupt him, and attract the attention of the Chair.

"Mr. Speaker," he cried; "will the gentleman from Arkansas yield to me for a moment?"

"I cannot yield," cried the speaking member from Arkansas; "I have only ten minutes left," and he continued his speech.

"Mr. Speaker," reiterated the Republican; "I move to lay the bill for the 'Establishment of a Government Mule-farm in Arkansas,' which the honorable gentleman from Arkansas is advocating, on the table."

"Hear, hear!" from the Republican side of the House.

"Mr. Speaker," the Arkansas member retorted, "I am entitled to the consideration of this House for an hour, of which there are ten minutes still left." "Five!" shouted his interrupting colleague. Another member rose. "If the gentleman from Arkansas is filibustering, I propose that he select a more interesting topic." There was general laughter at this sally. Five minutes later the speech was ended, and the Shipping bill became the order of the day.

The first speech made in favor of it was by Kelters. It was a direct, able utterance, which indicated an earnest belief in the bill. His address was an appeal to common-sense and to the utility of the measure in question; it was a bald enumeration of facts, which, as he stated them, carried weight even to the opposition and conviction to the supporters of the bill. When he had finished, Manning, having been recognized by the Chair, rose to make his speech.

MARION MANNING

The galleries were crowded; the floor was full of movement; members sat at their desks or leaned their arms on the green cloth screens at the back; some stood against the walls, by the doors; there was general attention and expectancy.

The speech which followed was one of the ablest utterances ever made in the House. It was pithy, logical, brilliant. One forcible argument after another, in favor of the Shipping bill, was brought forward, elucidated, and driven home. He expounded and adjured his colleagues and the House to seize this great opportunity and to make greatness of nationality, pre-eminence of nationality. He urged the passing of the Shipping bill as a protective measure and an inducement to trade; as an increase of strength to the country in time of war; on the grounds of utility and patriotism. He traced the growth of the merchant marines in other countries, and the effect of subsidies towards the enlargement of them; he briefly sketched the history of the American merchant marine; of the height to which it had risen, and the depth to which it had fallen. By a few statistics he outlined the history of other industries, trades, and commercial enterprises in the United States, showing their relation to foreign competition, demonstrating their equality, and in many cases their superiority, to any other commercial undertaking of the same character abroad. "But," he added, in slow, deliberate accents, "all those products of American industry—*i.e.*, more than ninety per cent. of them—are carried from our shores in foreign ships. Is this right and just to our own interests?"

He spoke long, and treated his subject exhaustively, but he never bored or wearied his audience. For the time being, he held the House in the hollow of his hand, and he forced the House to realize that a new personality

MARION MANNING

had sprung up within it, and that a new intellect and power was seizing the imagination of the people. Although Manning had spoken more than once before, this was the first time that he had claimed the attention of his colleagues, and invited their interest for so long a period, and in so masterful a manner.

All unsought and all unwished for, a thrill of pride swept over Marion as she listened to the flow of his eloquence and to the storm of his vigorous speech. For the first time in many months she experienced that feeling of pride in him which formerly had been a part of her being. Her eyes shone with a deep excitement and her cheeks had more color in them than had been their wont of late. For the moment she forgot his moral shortcomings, and lost herself in admiration for his intellectual gifts. Once again she was proud and glad to be his wife.

He was nearing the close of his speech, his auditors, spellbound, were hanging on each word, while he, having mastered his subject and the legislature he was addressing, and having twisted out of all recognition the arguments which had been used by the opposition against the bill, now elevated on a pedestal the bill itself, which, under his deft touch, became a monument of economic and national glory. He stopped suddenly. He had earned his fame. He sat down satisfied.

A loud buzz of talk sprang up on every side; members drew long breaths and looked at each other in astonishment, and from both sides they flocked to shake hands and offer him congratulations. All who knew Marion, in the Members' gallery, tried to attract her eye and smile or wave felicitations; the nearer ones whispered in her ear, and Mrs. Caring pressed her hands till she laughingly begged for mercy. "My dear," the former cried, "why live any longer! For we have

MARION MANNING

heard the greatest speech ever made in this House. The bill is a certainty now. It probably will be voted unanimously. Marion, you should be a very proud woman to-day." And Marion, unquestionably, was pleased and elated at her husband's triumph, and inwardly moved as she had not been for long, long days. The galleries and floor were very noisy; people were excited and thrilled; only a few preserved their balance of judgment and control. The other side, however, realized that the death-knell to their opposition had been sounded.

Meanwhile, another member had arisen, and the Speaker was knocking his desk vigorously with his gavel. "The House will come to order," he said, several times, and, at last, it did settle down to a semblance of quiet. The member who now addressed the Chair, and was recognized as the "gentleman from California," was an antagonist of the bill on hand. Marion had never seen him before, and did not know his name, but she soon found herself, with the rest of the House, listening to him with deep attention. His speech was of a very different order from Manning's. As a rhetorical effort it was far inferior, and in brilliancy of expression, in force of delivery, it could not be compared with that which had preceded it. The speaker's vocabulary was much smaller than Manning's, his voice was less pleasing; but if the words he used were few and simple, they were straightforward and direct, and his delivery was earnest and sincere. He leaned one hand on his desk as he spoke, and his eyes never swerved from the Speaker's seat. He spoke quietly, but distinctly; slowly, but forcibly. He did not attempt to refute Manning's arguments; he merely stated his views and objections to the bill, and made a strong plea for its overthrow. He began by saying: "I am a citizen of a sea-faring town, and that town, if this bill is passed,

MARION MANNING

will profit as largely as any other town in the Union from its benefits; but, at the risk of diverting funds which otherwise would benefit my constituents, I must pronounce my objections to this bill and oppose it to the best of my ability."

One of the first reasons he gave for his opposition was that the country did not, at the present moment, require a greater merchant marine than it already possessed. In the days when the nation was young, and the great West had not yet been opened up, and when business was searching for an investment for its capital, shipping was found to be the most lucrative and prosperous industry in the country. In consequence ships were built, and the United States vied with great European powers on the seas. But, as the years went on, as wooden ships had to be replaced by steel ones; as the plant for their building was found to be of unprofitable cost; and as the West opened its doors to new commercial enterprises, and Eastern capitalists found that the development of this Western country would be more profitable to them than the building of ships, the business world withdrew its control from the seas and began to assert its supremacy on land. "If money-making concerns cannot discover for themselves that ship-building and ship-owning is a profitable investment, and directly or indirectly a benefit to the country, why should this government attempt to prove it to them by injudicious expenditure of money, and if they can discern it for themselves, why should they need the assistance of a government bounty?" Here he also expressed his objection to the unnecessary outpouring of money by Congress every year, and to the excessive taxation which, not now, but ultimately, must be the result of such a system of needless extravagance. This bill, he continued, was but an example of many others; it embodied the desire of a few men

MARION MANNING

for political glory and for the furtherance of the money-making schemes of their constituents. In his opinion, the millions which it was proposed to give as bounties to ship-builders and ship-owners would be unjustly distributed and wrongly used, for it would enrich a few great companies and a comparatively small number of financial leaders. People who owned stock in those same companies would probably make fortunes, he continued; the larger ship-building companies would absorb the smaller ones, and corporations undoubtedly would benefit from it, but not the country. He said that the duty of every Congressman was to work for the good and prosperity of the people he represented, and that by that rule he could understand the gentleman from New Hampshire's reason for supporting the bill, which would undoubtedly benefit his constituents; but, he added: "Every Congressman must have, besides, a greater national and humanitarian end in view, for unless high ideals work hand in hand with material advantage, that advantage can never be lastingly good nor beneficial." He fought for what he believed; he argued on behalf of justice, for the people of the country, and against what, he thought, was fraud and injustice. As each word was weighed, and each sentence was deliberate and sincere, so his earnestness compelled the respect of all who heard him.

Marion from the first had listened to him with deep attention. Her nature and beliefs, insensibly to her, responded to his appeals, and before he had finished his speech a sense of true knowledge awoke in her with vibrating pain. It was not what he said so much as the way he said it that stirred her. It was the earnestness of his manner, the simplicity and sincerity of his words, more than the actual arguments he used, that opened her eyes to what she deemed the insincerity of her husband. It was the truthfulness in

MARION MANNING

his accents which made her recognize not the falsity, but the sordidness, the hypocrisy of those which had filled the House a half-hour previously. It may have been that the man on the floor touched a certain sympathetic chord in her nature; it may have been that she had known it already for a long time, and needed only a flash of light to make it harshly clear. Whatever it was, she realized that while the bill was good, while most of its supporters were disinterested, John's motives had been different. She saw all clearly, and she wondered why she had been deceived by his eloquence. It was not the arguments he had used that were false; it was the man himself. It was his motives; the ambition, the selfishness in him, the desire for money. For now she was certain that he would reap some material advantage from his work and its accomplishment. If but one corporation was enriched, she knew that he must, in some way, be connected with it. His brilliancy, his intellect, had disguised that fact from the public, for he had had a great subject to play with and he had used his opportunity well. She knew, however, that any other subject which would have promised equal advantages would have done as well. Even his patriotism, which to this last moment she had believed in, was bereft of any semblance of reality, and the shame of it struck home to her with savage force. She had loved a man without a soul.

The member from California spoke tersely, and to no great length, but his speech produced a forcible impression, both on the floor and in the galleries. But he spoke too late. His arguments against corporations and trusts were too advanced and visionary for any immediate fruition, and his charges of some frauds and injustices in the bill were unproductive of any lasting effect on his hearers. Lofty patriotism, a

MARION MANNING

great love for the people, and honesty of mind and soul, however, must make a profound impression and be an influence for good, wherever shown, so that although Manning's speech would bear result and the other be outwardly fruitless, to the mind of one, if not more among the hundreds present, the second was the greater of the two.

When he sat down, Marion stared rigidly at him and hardly heard Mrs. Caring's question: "Who is he?" and the answer from some one: "Hood—George Hood, of Los Angeles, California." She paid no attention to the scenes which followed; to a short speech from Curtin, of Minnesota, in which he attacked Hood's premises, refuted many of his accusations, and finally said that while there might be some mistakes in the bill, which were impossible to prevent in such a large appropriation of money, yet that the good which would result from it would far outweigh the evils; nor did she listen more attentively to the heated debate which preceded the final vote.

When, forty minutes later, amid great excitement, the roll-call finally came and the vote was taken, the Shipping bill was found to have passed the House by a large majority. In the clamor that followed the galleries emptied, and Marion and Mrs. Caring fought their way through the crowds to the open air again. They heard one man say to another as they passed by: "Told you Manning's the coming man. By Jove! he's the best speaker I've ever listened to." But the words left Marion unmoved. Farther on two Congressmen brushed up against them, and she overheard one say: "Hood's a better man than the rest of us, but I doubt if he succeeds. He's too visionary. You can't expect to reform the world in a twinkling, and I am afraid that's his trouble." Marion wondered then, if she hated the man they were speaking of, for

MARION MANNING

the shame he had made her feel, but realized that hate, as well as love, had passed her by, and were no more for the asking.

When, half an hour later, she reached her house and was alone, she stood for a few moments immovable in the middle of the room.

"How stupid I have been," she thought, "and how much I have wasted on him!"

And then, with perfect indifference, she rang for tea, and took up the latest novel, which lay on the table beside her.

XVIII

"Before man made us citizens, great nature made us men."

—LOWELL

A FEW days later, at an official evening-party, Marion met George Hood. The first words which he spoke to her after his introduction were:

"I don't believe in bringing politics into private life, do you? and I am sure that you don't mind meeting a political opponent!" She looked at him with curiosity.

"Oh, I am too broad-minded to have enemies," she answered, with a laugh.

"Then come and sit down where the mob is less active," he said, and led the way through the crowded rooms to one where only a few stragglers sat and where easy-chairs looked tempting and inviting. "This reception," he continued, "is the result of a democratic desire to emulate Sparta. It's the survival of the fittest; it's one thing to have a mind, but it's much more important to have muscle. Because the more hands you shake, the nearer looms the Presidential chair. I swing clubs daily to prepare myself for that contingency!"

Marion laughed. "But it isn't only the men in public life who suffer," she said; "it's the women also; look at Mrs. Hammond. She has probably shaken fifteen hundred hands to-night, and every Wednesday afternoon does almost as much. It's fearful work!"

MARION MANNING

"Oh, I agree," he answered. "But you women are supposed to be more ambitious than your husbands. And then the temptation to be popular is greater for you than for them. Shall I tell you a story about my youthful ambitions and what came of them? My mother was the most ambitious, and, God bless her! the best woman I ever knew. But she wanted me to be President, and, at the tender age of eight, I had fully made up my mind to satisfy her desire. I shall never forget my rage when our gardener's boy announced to me one day that he intended to be the President of the United States when he grew up. I was so disgusted with his cheek that I couldn't answer him at all, only ran to my father and blurted out the story to him. 'Well,' he said to me, good-naturedly, 'if he's clever enough, he can be. He has as much right as you to aspire to the White House.' I remember that I went away furious and humbled, and that the Presidential chair, from that time on, lost its charm for me. 'It's worth nothing,' I said to my mother, with a grand manner, 'if Tommy has the same right to it as I!'"

Marion laughed again. "But you've changed your mind since!"

"With age I became more democratic," he remarked, sententiously. Then he looked at her with interest. "But tell me, you are not a New-Englander, are you?"

"Oh no," she said, quickly. "I am a Virginian. My sympathies are entirely Southern."

"Oh!" he said. "But then, North and South don't mean so much these days."

"They mean something," she answered, and rose. "Shall we return to the mob?"

"As you will, though the notion doesn't tempt me; but do come for an ice first, and tell me what's your favorite way of amusing yourself." They walked to the dining-room.

MARION MANNING

George Hood was a man of striking appearance. About six feet two inches tall, and broad-shouldered as well, with a large head and strong, ugly face, he drew attention, and yet did not attract at first sight. For in repose he had a forbidding, almost unpleasant expression. When he spoke, however, his face lighted up, and his habit of listening with intense attention made him curiously attractive in conversation. He rarely smiled, and either looked grave, which in flip-pant talk added a humorous touch to his words, or laughed heartily and infectiously. He made it a practice of never talking seriously to a woman, so that he always conveyed a sensation of sarcasm to them, unintentional though it was. With men he was totally different. He took politics as he took life, from a serious stand-point, and he let his own sex see it. He was earnest and enthusiastic in his work, as in his play. He had been in Congress many years, and was thought much of by his own party. Whether he would ever rise to heights of fame could not be fore-told, some of his ideas and ideals being, perhaps, too visionary for actual fruition.

This was the man who by his speech had aroused Marion's interest and sympathy, and who now, un-awares, by his trivial conversation had amused but somewhat disappointed her. After she left him she mused on the futility of any expectation, and on the perversity of man. Then Sir James Leverich joined her, and she decided that he, at least, was what he represented himself to be, and therefore satisfac-tory.

"By Jove! you're fresh still!" he exclaimed at once; "and it's a wonder, in this fearful heat. What you Americans want to crowd your houses so for, to feed the populace, is more than I can see."

"It isn't the populace," retorted Marion. "It's the

MARION MANNING

two Houses of Congress, and the Diplomatic Corps, and the Cabinet, and the—”

“And a few more,” he added, wearily. “Oh, you’re right; they are a distinguished lot—but it doesn’t make them more attractive *en masse*. What did you think of Hood? I saw him talking to you.”

“He’s attractive, I think,” she answered, “but a disappointment. I expected something different.”

“Did you?” he said. “Well, do you know, I did not expect you to say that. Though they do say that he’s not himself with women. Supposed to be flippant with them. But I should have thought that you—”

“Oh, I’m just the same as the others,” she said, with a little, weary intonation to her voice. “But why does he dislike women?”

“I don’t know that he dislikes them,” Leverich answered. “Perhaps he’s afraid of them. Hood’s a curious man, but I don’t know him well enough to explain the intricacies of his character to you.”

“I do. What do you want to know?” said a deep, hearty voice behind them, and they turned to recognize one of the Senators from California—General Owens. He was a man of about sixty-five—rugged, white-haired, keen-eyed, one of the quiet forces of the Senate. “I’ve known Hood since he was a little boy,” he continued, “and I’ll tell you what, sir, he’s one of the finest men I know!”

“Tell us about him,” Leverich said, and the Senator sat down beside them.

“We want to know why he’s flippant with women.”

“Flippant, is he?” retorted the Senator. “There’s no man less flippant that I know; but I’ll tell you his story. And you, young man, Britisher as you are, will do well to listen to what an American can do for himself!”

MARION MANNING

Leverich smiled. "Don't take me for a British type! Too poor an example. But I'm all ears."

"Well, I'll tell you." General Owens leaned forward in his chair. "George Hood's father was my most intimate friend. Our houses adjoined, and we grew up together, and from school days to business days we were never apart. We went into the same lawyer's office, too. Then I married, and he followed suit in a couple of years; and the Civil War came, and we both enlisted on the Northern side. This boy was born the first year of the war, while his father was away besieging Vicksburg. Well, after it was all over, Hood and I both decided to move out to California, as funds were getting low and we had families to support. I went to San Francisco, and Hood to Southern California, and it was on a ranch near Los Angeles that George grew up. His father died when he was about twelve, and all the money he had made vanished like smoke, so that George had to begin at that early age to support his mother. And he worked like a nigger, that boy did. He used to work in the fields to try to make the ranch pay; then, when they had to give it up and move to town, he went into a dry-goods shop and sold behind a counter. Once when he was out of work he got engaged on a street-car line, and drove a car for two months. His poor mother used to cry at the thought of her boy doing such work. She was a proud woman, Mrs. Hood, and came of good old New York stock, and it went against the grain for her to see him knocking round like any other common youngster about. But George was obstinate. He only cared for two things in the world—his mother and his country. By Jove! you never saw such a little patriot! His one idea was to be a soldier and fight for his country. But he was still too young for that, and his mother was poor. So in the daytime

MARION MANNING

he earned money for her, and in the evenings he studied."

"Model boy, that," interrupted Leverich. "I should have played!"

The Senator looked at him severely for a moment. "I reckon, sir," he finally said, "that you would."

"Don't interrupt," Marion remarked to the Englishman. "I want to hear the end of the story."

General Owens went on: "Well, the result of it all was—that he got on—and supported his mother. But inside of him all the time was a strong wish to do something for his country. But there was no fighting to be done, and even if there had been he probably couldn't have left his work. So he got engaged instead. I never saw the girl, but they tell me she was a pretty, vain little thing, without many sensible ideas in her head. Still, George thought she was the finest thing he'd ever seen, and most people would think that was all that was necessary. But it wasn't, because she played false to him. There was a Spanish fellow about—a Mexican, really, I think he was—but he talked high talk about Spain and the mother-country, etc., and he wore splendid Mexican clothes and looked like an hidalgo, and he took the girl's fancy. She never could have loved any one very much, but in her little, vulgar mind she compared George unfavorably to the dago. So she set about to find an excuse to break off the engagement. She was rather afraid of Hood, and didn't like just to tell him that she'd changed her mind; so she finally asked the Spanish fellow to do it for her. He had enough bravado for anything, and one evening, on the veranda of her house, as he was sitting there alone with Hood, both smoking—he'd had rather too much drink, too—he told him that he intended to marry the girl. George didn't want to quarrel there, within

MARION MANNING

hearing of her people inside the house, so he never said a word, but made the man walk down into the garden with him. And then he faced him. The Spaniard was such a miserable fellow that he blurted out the whole story the next time he was a bit full, and that's how I heard it. George never opened his lips about it to any one." Leverich and Marion were listening breathlessly; the crowd was leaving, only a few people remained in the room besides themselves. "Well, the long and the short of it is," continued the Senator, "that George told the man that the girl was his, that she cared for him, that he refused to give her up to any one, and that he would kick the Mexican out of the place if he ever broached the subject to him again. The Mexican at this laughed loudly.

"'Cares for you!' he cried; 'fine caring!'

"'What do you mean, sir?' shouted Hood.

"'Well, she just hates you,' was the jeering answer; 'and she belongs to me.' At this juncture George dealt him a blow which knocked him down. The other was too great a coward to get up and hit back, but from the ground he laughed feebly still.

"'Ha, ha! she spent last night with me!' George's face then looked so terrible that the man was afraid and crawled to his feet, edging away from his tormentor. But George's hand was on his collar.

"'That's a lie,' he said, under his breath and from between clenched teeth, 'and if you don't retract it I shall kill you for it.' With which he whipped a revolver from his pocket and pointed it at the man's head. 'Say that it's a lie!' he continued, in loud tones. The terrified Mexican threw up his hands.

"'It's a lie!' he cried, and as he did so something fell from his breast-pocket. The moonlight was bright in the garden and Hood saw something flash from the ground. He bent down and picked up the thing which

MARION MANNING

had fallen, still, of course, covering the Mexican with his pistol. Then he staggered back, because it was a locket—one that he had given the girl, and which she had told him she always wore round her neck.

“‘It’s true!’ He said the words so low that the Spaniard barely heard them, but an awful silence followed. ‘You can go!’ he said, ‘but you must go quickly.’ The Spaniard didn’t wait to hear any more, and escaped. The next day he ran away with the girl. Hood never bothered about women after that. His mother died the next year, and he has gone back to his first love—the Union!”

Marion and Leverich were silent, and the old man polished his glasses.

“Well, well!” he said, “women are queer, but men are queerer—eh?” and he smiled at Marion. But she did not heed him. She was comparing her case with Hood’s.

“The truth of the matter is,” enunciated Leverich, “that love’s a mistake!” She looked at him in surprise. How could he have guessed her thoughts?

Manning came up at that moment and accosted them cheerfully. There was an ugly expression about his mouth, however, which belied his words, and before long he proposed to Marion to go home. Ten minutes later he and his wife left the house.

“Well, I hear nice things about you!” he exclaimed, as soon as the carriage door was shut and the horses had started. She looked surprised.

“Really,” she said—“and what are they?”

He laughed sarcastically. “Oh, about you and Leverich!”

“Leverich!” she cried, in astonishment—“Leverich! What *do* you mean?”

“Exactly what I say! I overheard one woman say to another to-night that he seemed badly smitten,

MARION MANNING

and that you seemed to be enjoying yourself famously."

"Enjoying myself!" It was Marion's turn to laugh; then she stopped. "Well, and what if I do? Is there any objection to it, I should like to know?"

"None whatever!" He was perfectly calm by this time. "If you like flirting, why, go ahead. It won't hurt me. In fact, it might be rather a good thing! Only remember that in that case we're quits. People in glass houses can't throw stones!" Marion shuddered and drew away from him. "Oh, you know, I've stood this sort of thing long enough," he went on. "Nice life you've made me lead for the past twelve months, with your bad temper and your sullen, silent ways. I'm tired of it, I tell you, and I only wish I had Claire Walford back again. I wouldn't stop this time, you may be sure. Did you think you were living with an angel, and, when you found he was only a man, made a fuss? By George! it's enough to drive one desperate, and how I got that bill through with it all is more than I can tell. Pretty well done, too, it was." He got complacent again at the thought of his success, but Marion sat rigid in the opposite corner of the carriage. Then the desire to avoid recriminations and scenes made him pleasanter, and after a silence he said:

"By George! Marion, that crush was enough to make any one crazy! For pity's sake, don't remember this against me to my dying day!"

"I don't remember things now. You needn't worry," she answered, low.

John Manning was in a bad frame of mind that night when he went to his room. He was annoyed at having lost his temper, and particularly at having reproached Marion of flirting with Leverich. For he could not help reflecting that if she allowed her name

MARION MANNING

to be linked with that of the Englishman, it exonerated him in a measure for his treatment of her; that if she amused herself with some one else, it left him freer to pursue his own course. Now, however, that he had opened her eyes to the fact, she might cease to indulge in what in reality he knew to be but innocent pastime; and such a step, in his own mind, he could not help deprecating. More than once lately he had regretted his marriage, and he did so now again; then realized that it had brought him many useful things. "Oh, well," he thought, "as long as other things go my way, what's the odds? I've a long life ahead of me to accomplish what I want, and I am on the fair road to it now!" And he went to sleep in a comfortable frame of mind.

But Marion's sleep was troubled that night, for she dreamed incessantly, and in her dreams Hood and Leverich and the Mexican were mixed up in the queerest way with her own curious actions, and once she woke up in terror, crying: "Stop! Don't kill me! It's a lie!"

XIX

"To compare great things with small."

—MILTON.

UNTIL John had reproached her with her friendship for Leverich, Marion had not dreamed that what little she saw of the English secretary could be understood as anything like a flirtation, and she was all the more astonished and annoyed by his remarks. She had been so eager for distraction and amusement when she returned to Washington that, unawares, she had drifted into making Sir James her social mentor and friend, for he never bored, and was only there when she wanted him, not otherwise. But to be accused of flirting with him was unfair and unjust. She accepted it, however, as she accepted other facts now—indifferently, almost callously. Trouble had changed her greatly, for she had grown from a light-hearted, blissful girl, into a sad-hearted woman with whom the mind was becoming the controlling guide of life. She had schooled herself to indifference, and now it had become a part of her; she had made up her mind to live her life with what surrounded her, drawing from it as much pastime as she could and letting the rest drift, and she was growing bitter and hard. For, now that the mask had fallen from John's face, his self-satisfaction, his undisguised selfishness, his power of dissimulation when dissimulation was necessary, and the irritability of his temper, were daily growing more apparent and difficult to put up with. She was always

MARION MANNING

gentle with him, however, and tried to be kind, but she could not hide her indifference, and sometimes he noticed contempt, and almost hatred, in her look. Strange it is that grief can work to such different results!—that it can bring forth qualities and a strength unknown before, sharpen dangerous weapons which were blunt, or blur a bright picture with coarse brush; that the wound it makes, though it heal, will leave a scar, if a painless one, and that humanity shapes and fashions itself under its severe touch. Marion had fallen from a great height, and was therefore unable to see the proportionate value of things from a lower level, and as she did not dream that there are many points between the poles, she suffered severely in consequence. She recognized herself a failure, and was not prepared to court success again. While she had gone to one extreme in the past, she was fast approaching the other now, and as the best part of her nature had hardened under suffering, so the worst was now coming uppermost. Instead of getting sweeter and more noble, she was narrowing her sympathies by self-concentration, and letting trouble crush the thought of other and better uses of life, meantime schooling herself to scorn and despise those things she had once held sacred. And there was no one to save her from herself. Her father was not with her continually, and, besides, from him, above all others, she strove to hide the real state of her feelings. No one else cared sufficiently. Leverich, perhaps, was coming to do so, but he was not a character sufficiently strong to influence her seriously, and Mrs. Caring, who was rather a sceptical woman herself, though deploring the change in her friend, could do nothing to hinder it. And Marion's only other friends, Molly Hart and Aleck Houghton, she had not seen for several months. Later, however, Molly was coming to stop with her, and although she looked forward to

MARION MANNING

her visit, yet she did not feel quite ready to face the straightforward glance of her girl friend.

Several weeks passed, and once again she met Mr. Hood. She had gone to see an old friend of her father's in Georgetown, and after the visit was over had started to walk home. On her way through one of the side streets, where only the poorer part of the population lived, she saw a group of people coming out of a small house, and among them recognized Hood. With him were two or three young men and several boys. They were all talking in loud, excited voices, and as she came nearer to them she could not help overhearing some remarks.

"I wish the Republicans would stop crowing about that Shipping bill. It's about time they got out and gave us a chance."—"What good does it do us to work, if we can never vote or run for an office?" Suddenly Hood stopped. Marion was behind him, and halted, too.

"Look here, boys!" he said. "If you're going in for selfish politics, you might as well not go in at all. I want you to be good Democrats, but I want you to feel that party must be second to country. If you only care for one thing in this world, care for your country, and then, boys, you can't fail to help her and do good work—whether it brings you office or not. Don't talk to me of office always; think of America, think of the land that you are part of! It's the only thing worth thinking of!" The last words were uttered in a lower voice. The young people round him looked at him with awe and admiration; even Marion had listened to him breathlessly. There was no traffic in the street, only a few people were about.

"Enough of politics," Hood suddenly cried. "Now, Jack, have you the bat? If you don't reach the field before I do, I'll play no baseball to-day." The young-

MARION MANNING

est boy in the party was off before the sentence was finished, followed by three or four others. "Now," continued Hood, putting his hand on the arm of a tall stripling beside him, "we'll take the short cut!" And he veered round in his footsteps and faced Marion. "Mrs. Manning!" Then he laughed. "You've caught me at it!" and he shook hands with her. "It's a political club," he added, in a whisper—the boys had moved on. "I'm trying to make more converts to Democracy! I'm burrowing in the Republican nest! They all think it's great!" pointing to his companions ahead.

Marion looked grave. "Preaching doesn't do any good!" she said, shortly. The moment the words had passed her lips she regretted them, and hated herself for having said them. He looked at her with surprise, then bowed, and walked on.

What had induced her to make such a remark? She could not account for it, unless it was that the rapid transition between the earnest words he had used in his little speech to the boys and the light, jocose ones he had greeted her with, had irritated her. Perhaps it was only because her new, bitter self was showing itself very plainly. As she walked home, Marion wondered if in the future she would alienate every one about her by her words and deeds. Would that be the next step? she wondered, bitterly. For wasn't it said that the more you had the more would be given you, and the less you had the more would be taken away? Queer justice, she reflected, and strange doctrine.

After that incident the days dragged on again without variation or relief, until March came, and Molly with it.

"Why, Marion, Marion, Marion!" Molly had shut the door, and the two were alone in the latter's bed-

MARION MANNING

room. "Gracious, how long it is since I've seen you! Let me look at you well, and see if you've changed."

Marion bore the scrutiny badly, for she flushed, then got pale, and then laughed. "I can't stand such inspection," she said; "the light's too strong to be becoming."

But Molly was looking at her gravely. "You have changed," she remarked. "You look *quite* different!"

"I should hope I did," retorted Marion, throwing herself on the sofa. "How deadly uninteresting not to change in a year! You don't believe in standing still, do you?"

"I think I'm a morass," Molly replied. "I'm just the same as I was a dozen years ago—just as charming and just as interesting!"

"But morasses move underneath." Marion was looking at the girl through half-shut lids. "The great thing in life, my dear," she continued, "is to be either a jack-in-the-box, which I am, or a morass, which you say you are, though I don't agree. The only advantage of a morass would be, of course, that you would see everything fall and die about you while you remained the same!"

Molly had seated herself before the table facing the windows, and leaned her two elbows on it, while her chin rested on her clasped hands. "I fancy that in the end," she said, "one would long to be disturbed, and even die, like the others."

"Of course, the blessing of being mortal is, that one's not just a stone," Marion laughed, shortly, "and that one does end somewhere!"

"I shouldn't say that was a blessing exactly; why not be immortal like the gods," Molly rejoined. "I should love, above everything, to live on a cloud and feast on nectar, and be beautifully young always."

"And I prize it as a gift that mortality means—How illogical and contradictory we are!" Marion inter-

MARION MANNING

rupted herself, and, jumping from the sofa, exclaimed: "Time to dress for dinner. Let's adjourn philosophy till later!"

Molly's arrival was the signal for a total change of front in the Manning household. She revolutionized the old order of things, upset the tranquil lethargy of one season and the volcanic disturbances of another, and created an atmosphere of fun in a house where no fun had existed for many dreary months. She enlivened the heretofore dull or silent meals, and she joked with John and teased him about his political successes in a way that delighted him.

"By George! Miss Hart," he exclaimed, one day, after some bright sally on her part, "you ought never to leave us. What can we offer you as an inducement to stay?"

"And fill the office of court jester?" she laughed. "I'm not to be bought," she continued. "I only make my value felt when I know that the days of my visits are numbered."

"Marion, make her stay longer," John pleaded.

"Wouldn't you, Molly?" his wife asked, and after a while another week was added to the length of the girl's visit. While she amused John, she was also stimulating and sympathetic to his wife, for she had early divined that some trouble had fallen on her of which she could not speak, but which had changed the tenor of her life. So she diverted and encouraged her to do things which were good for her health, such as playing golf and riding. She dragged her to the theatre when any amusing play was on the stage, and in the late afternoon hours, when Marion, in her room, would lie down on her sofa for a short rest, and the spirits of the day would have died out, then Molly would sit on the floor and lean her head up against her, giving such silent sympathy as is most comforting.

MARION MANNING

One day she proposed that the Mannings should give a children's fancy-dress party.

"It's such fun," she explained. "I went to see one once in Boston, and it was the prettiest sight I have ever seen. It's very little trouble for you, and the children here would bless you forever after!" Marion demurred; she had no child of her own, wherefore should she invite others; but John jumped at the idea.

"Just the thing," he said, as he remembered certain Western Congressmen's wives, whose gratitude would be insured to him if he invited their children to this ball. So a date was fixed and invitations sent out, and the hearts of the younger members of the social world were warmed by the prospect of it. But Marion dreaded its coming. The thought of so many children in her sad home frightened and unnerved her, and though she appreciated Molly's good intention in making the suggestion, she yet felt that it was ill-advised. But she was kept busy preparing for it, and when the day arrived was almost as keen for the party to be a success as the children themselves.

At the last moment, and when all was ready to entertain the little guests, Molly came to her, with a rather heightened color in her cheeks, to say that Aleck Houghton had just arrived in Washington, and that she was sure he would like to come. So a note was promptly sent, and then the children began to arrive. And they came by the dozens, Pierrots and Pierrettes, Jacks and Jills, Little Boy Blues, and little Sally Waters, cooks and dairymaids, peasants and princes, little French marquis, in satin clothes and powdered hair, and still daintier marquises, with patches and paint. It was a beautiful sight. They trooped down the long hall to the door of the big library where Marion stood, and where they were to dance and play games to their hearts' content. There was music, which made youth

MARION MANNING

forget its shyness, and later there would be tea, which, being interpreted, meant ice-cream and cakes, a sufficient joy for a close future to make the present very gay. The grown-up people enjoyed themselves almost as much as those for whom the party was given. Leverich was there, and Mrs. Caring; old Senator Owens, and many other well-known men. Molly and Sir James were the life of the whole party; for they were indefatigable in inventing new games, or in leading the old ones, and in one way or another were the joy of the younger members of the ball.

Houghton arrived a little late. Marion had not seen him since the knowledge of the debt John owed to him had been disclosed to her, and the sense of the obligation which she felt she owed him, which neither time nor effort could efface, made her shy at meeting him. But his face was all smiles as he shook hands with her and thanked her for her invitation.

"Have you come from New York?" she asked.

"Yes, for a three days' visit. I'm hard at law now. I've actually got a case; but it's always wise in the midst of mental exertion to get away for a moment. It enables mediocre brains to grasp their subject more fully. Don't you agree?"

Marion laughed, nervously. "Well, I don't know; but we mustn't talk and amuse ourselves now. We must entertain the children." She could not bear to look in his face—that frank, manly face—knowing what she knew, and as she saw her husband move towards them she caught her breath hard.

"Hullo, Aleck, how are you?"

"Well, John!" and the moment was over, and they were laughing together. What a world of hypocrisies it is, she thought, and where does truth lie? Just then a very diminutive Indian chief was to be seen wandering disconsolately round the rooms. Marion went up to him.

MARION MANNING

"Who are you looking for, little Indian?" she said, slipping her hand over one of his.

He looked up at her with a woful face. "I've lost her," he said.

"Who's her?" she asked.

"Nannie!" he cried, and two great tears slowly melted the red paint with which his face was covered.

"I want to go home," he half sobbed.

"Oh no, you don't!" Marion cried, cheerfully. "There's going to be ice-cream soon, and crackers, with wonderful paper caps in them, and all kinds of nice things. Supposing you and I go and see whether they are all ready; shall we?" So the tears dried promptly, and hand-in-hand they went off, and a little later the Indian chief was brandishing his wooden tomahawk about in wild glee.

Once the children were at tea, Leverich went in search of Marion, and, when he found her, he made her sit down in a large chair in one corner of the library, while he ensconced himself on a stool beside her. "Just for a few minutes," he pleaded, as she spoke of her duty as a hostess. So they sat and talked. Sir James had a way with him, unintentional though it was, of making every woman whom he admired conspicuous by his attentions to her, which probably was the reason why his friendship with Mrs. Manning had been commented upon. Marion was fully conscious that his position, practically at her feet, if noticed by John, would be misunderstood by him, but the sight of Houghton had made her more indifferent than ever to her husband's opinion, and she amused herself for a short time with the Englishman's conversation.

Meanwhile Houghton had sought out Molly, and was assisting her in waiting on the children in the dining-room. If she had been noisy before, she was quiet now, and she looked almost pretty as she ordered Aleck

MARION MANNING

about, making him fetch and carry for her as she desired.

"What's the matter with those two?" Leverich asked Marion, as they stood at the dining-room door together, a little later. "Why don't they come to some understanding?"

"Do you pretend to understand human nature?" she asked; "for my part, I've long ago given up wondering at things."

"Well, of course, I should have, too," was the doleful response. "I've had enough experience to teach me that; but the trouble is," he continued, in a livelier tone, "I have got a bump of curiosity in my head, which never gives me any peace. Can't help it; it's there!"

"What's there?" inquired Houghton, who at that moment joined them.

"A bump in my head," he replied, with a melancholy air. Houghton laughed and they separated.

The fancy party was drawing to a close. Mothers and nurses were gathering together their charges; some of the grown-ups were waiting in the library to have a quiet cup of tea after the children had gone, and John was bidding very effusive farewells to the wives of the Congressmen he wanted to propitiate, even escorting some of them down to their carriages. He was in a better humor than he had been for some time. Molly had enlivened the house, and had made him feel not such a blackguard as Marion's gloomy face had usually implied. So far, he thought the world had judged him rightly, and in the minds of thinking men he occupied a high position. The Shipping bill was his great triumph, but not the only one, by any means, he intended to have. It was only one in a series of great actions with which his name should be linked. Men who had previously misjudged or disliked him now

MARION MANNING

owned to his power, and in society he was greatly made up to. Before many years he would represent his State in the Upper House—and beyond that? His ambition saw greater prizes in view. His married life, it is true, had been a failure, but he preferred domestic trouble, if troubles in one shape or another must be the lot of man, to vexations and drawbacks in his career.

He was making these reflections as he stood by a window in the front drawing-room, watching the stream of carriages roll up to the door below him and drive away, when he was startled by the sound of his own name. The room was rather dark, and he stood in the shadow, so that two people who were strolling slowly through the room on their way to the hall did not notice him. Though they were talking in low tones, yet he heard them distinctly.

"He's a remarkably clever man," the male voice was saying, "and thought a lot of by his party."

"Yes, and so agreeable, too," the woman answered. "I wonder, though, what's happened between him and his wife!" John listened with still greater interest. "Because, you know," she went on, "something must have happened. They used to adore each other!"

"And you don't think that now they are at the same pitch of affection?" the man asked. "Believe me, it's only a natural sequence to frenzy—nothing else."

"I don't know." She lowered her voice. "Sir James Leverich seems to be pretty devoted to her. That may be the reason!" John gasped a little; was that the world's verdict?

"Have they any children?" the man continued.

"No—none, and it's a pity, too, isn't it? No boy to carry on the name." They passed out of the room, and there was silence once more in it. John looked out of the window again; nearly all the carriages had

MARION MANNING

gone. The square looked gray and deep and very large. A dark frown had gathered on his forehead.

"Yes, true!" he muttered, low. "No heir to carry on the name which I have made." Then his brow cleared and his hand fell with a heavy rap on the window-sill before him. "Never mind, by George! for I'll make my name great enough to live without descendants!"

XX

"I shall be like that tree, I shall die at the top."

—SWIFT.

THE following week John was laid low with typhoid fever.

The news of it came as a blow to his fellow-workers in the House. "At this crucial time, too!" was heard on all sides; and "Bad luck for him!" And John himself considered it "infernally bad luck" when the doctors first apprised him of his condition.

"But I don't feel ill enough for typhoid," he had rebelled.

"Oh, you will, before long; don't worry," was the encouraging reply. He was listless and tired enough at any rate to submit to orders, and, as the fever increased, forgot all about cancelled engagements and good or bad luck.

Marion at first was staggered by the news of the serious character of his illness, but she soon recovered herself, and with great calmness reordered her household and her own life. She sent to Baltimore for the most efficient nurses; she gave the patient into the care of the best doctors in the city, and she did all that human effort could do to effect his early recovery. At the same time she refused to accept assistance from any one, and bore the whole burden of responsibility upon her own shoulders. For Molly had offered to remain with her; her father, also, had invited himself; but to them both she had given the same an-

MARION MANNING

swer—given kindly, but without hesitation—that she preferred to stay alone. So it was as she desired.

With his illness, Marion's feelings towards John underwent another change. Pity and sympathy for his weakness and suffering took the place of harsh resentment, and as the days went on she knew that something that had been hard within her was softening and melting. For even a bruised heart must relent at helplessness, and Marion's was no exception to this rule. As John's illness got rapidly worse, developing complications which greatly aggravated the disease, his fever ran very high, and he became quite unconscious of his whereabouts, talking incoherently in delirium. Sometimes she would sit by his bedside, watching him with intent, pitying eyes, listening to the wild ravings of his fever, wondering that a man who had always been so strong could lie so low in weakness; at other times she would avoid his room from a feeling of nervousness and dread. And all the while she moved about as in a dream, only alert when something was required of her, not analyzing her thoughts and feelings. For in her a certain new tenderness was being born. The dormant maternity which was a strong part of her being, but which had never had the wherewithal on which to lavish itself, awakened, and she suddenly saw the sick man as with a mother's eyes. And what mother, however stern, can look without forgiveness at the erring child who is stretched helpless before her? And from his state of dependence towards her must she not find, also, a certain joy? Marion found it, too. John had wronged her grievously—in many ways he had shattered her life; but he was now at death's door, and it was her duty and her desire to tend and care for him. She grudged no moment of those long, tedious days, although the world pitied her for them. But

MARION MANNING

she was now absolute mistress, and while she avoided the thought of what might happen, was happy in the work forced upon her. She knew that the doctors were fighting for his life; but she did not think that he would die, and forbade herself to contemplate any future more remote than the morrow; and often, when sitting by his bed, while she listened to his wild words and saw his weak hands move restlessly over the sheet, she would be seized with sudden pity for him and would press her cool hands on his burning forehead or over his unseeing eyes, which were bright with the fever, and her touch would calm him for the present. Then she would hold his wandering fingers tight in her firm ones, and once the tears came into her eyes to see him thus oblivious of everything and as weak as a little child.

For it is difficult to feel anger or resentment against a child for the blow which it has struck us, and many older people are weak, yea, as children, and cannot always help the wrong they do. For each one has his own light to guide him, and some lights may be pure and very high and others low and colored. Marion, watching him, prayed silently: "Let God judge us, not short-sighted humanity."

The doctors told her that the fever must run its course, and that they hoped for the best; she listened to them patiently, wondering whether they guessed her inward content at the length of time which was imposed by the fever; smiling to herself at the surprise the world would feel if it knew that she was far happier than she had been for over a year; for what before had made her love him and later despise him—his strength—had vanished; his present weakness could only appeal to her and touch her.

Many people called and sent Marion messages of inquiry and sympathy, but she shut her door to nearly every one. Among the few she saw was Houghton.

MARION MANNING

He sent her such an urgent plea to be received that she could not refuse him; and he came twice, expressing such sincere regret at John's illness that she could not but be moved by it. He told her that she must send for him at any time she wanted him; that New York was only five hours off, and that before she knew it he would be with her. She marvelled at his sympathy, and thanked him deeply.

The second time he came he told her a strange piece of news: one which disturbed her not a little.

"Mrs. Walford has returned to Washington," he said; "she is staying at the Arlington now. I don't know whether she will take a house later or not. Her's is rented, you know."

"Mrs. Walford here!" Marion could not help exclaiming.

"She only arrived yesterday from Europe," was the answer.

Marion easily surmised that her husband's illness was the cause of that lady's precipitate return to Washington. But she became very angry when, the next day, Mrs. Walford's card was brought up to her room. She sent down word that she was not receiving; then, when the servant had left the room, let her indignation master her. Had the woman no decency left, or no pride, that she should try to obtrude herself upon her at this time when her husband lay ill, grievously ill, too, up-stairs? True, she had forgiven her once, but that had been on the impulse of the moment, when the full significance of her action had not dawned on her; also when she, Marion, was not what adversity had afterwards made her. Though she did not care for her husband, as she had called caring once, still he belonged to her, and at this supreme moment of his life she would not share him with anybody. All past claims had lapsed; hers was the

MARION MANNING

only one that held good, that could not be disputed. And she meant to hold it in the face of all who loved him or hated him. But that another should attempt to interfere, should disturb the peace of mind which his illness had created in her, filled her with anger, and she had no desire to spare Mrs. Walford nor to commiserate with her.

A few hours after she called, Marion received a letter from her. It was short, and ran as follows :

"DEAR MRS. MANNING,—I have only just lately returned from Europe, and have learned, with great regret, of your husband's illness. I am most anxious to obtain some reliable information as to his condition, and should be very grateful if you would let me call on you at any hour which you may name.

"Harry sends his love.

"Yours sincerely,

"CLAIRE WALFORD."

Marion was incensed by this missive—by the calmness of its request, and also by the allusion to Harry, which she considered quite out of place, by its tone and by its demand; and she wrote a cold answer :

"DEAR MRS. WALFORD,—My husband is as well as can be expected under the circumstances—so the doctors say. I appreciate your kind inquiries, and regret very much that I cannot see you. My time is too much engaged at present to receive visitors.

Yours sincerely,

"MARION MANNING."

It was a rude note, and it was tactless besides, and Marion knew it as she sent it, but she cared not at all. If Mrs. Walford had returned to Washington only for the purpose of seeing John, her expectation would be doomed, and the sooner she knew it the better. Marion could now enjoy the privilege of triumphing over her rival, of having the upper hand, where before she had

MARION MANNING

suffered much humiliation, and she found a pleasurable sensation in that knowledge.

The next day John was decidedly worse, and the nurses looked grave; but Marion was placid and undisturbed. "He will get well," she told them; but they shuddered at her confidence. Twenty-four hours later, however, she was forced to acknowledge that there was ground for their fear, and she herself saw that her husband lay in grave danger. Then it was that a second note came from Mrs. Walford. It was couched in different terms from the first. It began without preamble:

"Last March you told me that you forgave me the wrong I had done you. If you forgave then you should remember it now. Will you let me see him again before he dies, if what they say is actually true? This is the greatest boon that I have ever asked of any one. Don't refuse it, for it means life or death to me. C. W."

Marion read the letter over twice—first angrily, then relenting.

"When the doctors give him up I will let you know; then you can come," she wrote to her.

Then she went again to the sick man's room and stood at the foot of his bed watching him.

It was a very different John Manning from the one the world knew—strong, inflexible, virulent—for he was now emaciated by disease and racked by fever, wandering in his mind, helplessly surrendering his forces. The nurses were busy on either side of him; a doctor paced the room, stopping every now and then to give directions. Marion watched the drama enacted about her, not realizing that she was part of it herself, but living as if in a dream. John rambled on, screaming every now and then, or struggling in his bed, when the united efforts of the doctor and the two nurses were

MARION MANNING

required to keep him down. Once he moaned and sighed, and an infinite pity welled up in his wife's heart.

"Is he suffering?" she asked.

"Oh no; he knows nothing," was the quiet answer. Great tears filled her eyes and slowly trickled down her cheeks, but she never moved to wipe them; they dried where they had fallen.

The next morning early they told her that there was no hope left. At first she looked at them blankly, uncomprehendingly—then she understood. But she said nothing; only, before going to his room, she remembered what she had promised, and that deed should be written to her credit in the Book of Life—she sent a message to Mrs. Walford.

A moment later and she was at John's bedside. The nurses were no longer busy, they only stood guard; the doctor was at the foot of the bed. Marion peered into the dying man's face. Then she knelt beside him, bent her head close to him, and whispered in his ear. He was quite quiet now, the delirium had gone; only the unconsciousness of exhaustion was on him. He may have heard what she whispered to him, for his features relaxed, and the hard lines of suffering disappeared from his face; or it may have been that the meaning of her words touched his soul. She lifted her face and put her arms about him.

"John, don't you know me?" she said, in a low, sobbing voice. "Speak to me once—I've had you for such a short time—I never had a child before." She burst out crying, and those who were in the room thought that she was crazed by grief.

He only lived a few moments longer; then they led her into her own room.

That afternoon, late, before Colonel Heveril arrived, and while Marion was still alone, Mrs. Walford's card

MARION MANNING

was brought up to her. She read the name, quietly nodded an acquiescent answer to the servant, and in a few minutes the visitor was admitted. Marion was sitting on a straight-backed chair in her bedroom; she had sat in that chair the entire day, and yet it did not seem to her as if there was any reason for her to move from it. She did not rise, either, when Mrs. Walford entered, only looked at her wearily and questioningly. The latter had changed unmistakably in a year. She looked older, more tired; there were gray hairs among the auburn; her eyes were not so burning. As soon as the door had been shut behind her, she came forward quickly and bent down to put her hand on one of Marion's, which were lying motionless on her lap.

"Thank you for letting me know," she said, in a low, very tense voice. Marion drew her hand away. The other woman straightened herself up.

"I came when it was too late," she said, "but I want to see him now; will you take me?" Marion found voice.

"Take you?" she said. "It is all over now; there is no necessity."

"But I want to see his face again," the woman pleaded. Marion was silent. "Oh, you mustn't refuse me!" she continued. "Think what I am asking of you! Only to look at him as he lies there. No one will know." She was standing very still before Marion, with drawn eyes and with her hands pressed together firmly. "Think of it," she went on; "I am at your mercy. I have no rights, and yet I suffer, too, more than you know. He was everything to me—life itself—yet he died without me—some one else shut his eyes—" She looked piteously at the seated figure, but there was no answer. Then she got angry. "Are you made of flesh and blood that you can sit there as

MARION MANNING

you do and listen to me and say nothing? You are cold—inhuman!”

Marion lifted her eyes. “All that was human in me has been killed,” she said, wearily; but she rose. “I will take you—come with me.”

Silently they walked across the hall to a door, which Marion opened, and they were in his room. The white blinds were drawn down and the light was glaring and unnatural. There was a strong scent of flowers in the air, the furniture was all in place and orderly—there was nothing changed about the room except that order. But on the bed there were flowers, hundreds of them, white flowers and purple flowers, and they covered the sheet which was his pall. Marion stared at the flowers. She had not been in the room since he died. Then she drew the sheet from his face.

“You can look at him now,” she said, and drew back. Claire Walford moved forward.

“Oh, God!” she cried, low. It was all she said; but then she put her hand on him, passing it over his forehead, his eyes, and his mouth, and one by one the tears fell from her eyes on the white sheet. Marion watched her, and all at once she began to pull the flowers from the bed. Mrs. Walford turned slowly round.

“Stop!” she said, brokenly. “What are you doing?”

“He hated flowers.” The answer crept out unwillingly.

“In life, but not in death,” the older woman answered. “Let them lie.”

Marion’s hands dropped to her side; then, all of a sudden: “Oh, how I hate you!” she cried, roughly seizing Mrs. Walford’s arm and thrusting her away from her. “Go away, go away! You took him from me in life, leave him to me now that he is dead!” There was an oppressive pause.

The door opened quietly, and the old clergyman

MARION MANNING

from the church to which Marion went stood before them. He noted the angry pose of the two women, he saw the look of hate in Marion's eyes, and he lifted his hand.

Marion's eyelids dropped and her lips quivered, then she sank on her knees and buried her face against the bed. Mrs. Walford stared at him pitifully, and with weary steps she dragged herself to the door.

But before she had reached it he spoke, and his words fell like balm upon the wounded hearts of the two poor women:

"Lord, Thou hast been our refuge; from one generation to another.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made; Thou art God from everlasting and world without end. . . . For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday. . . .

"Thou hast set our misdeeds before us, and our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. . . .

"Turn Thee again, O Lord, at the last, and be gracious unto Thy servants."

Part 11

I

"Thank God, I—I also am an American."

—DANIEL WEBSTER.

IF an observant traveller, journeying on a clear spring day in the coach which daily plies its dusty way between Santa Barbara and San Juan, looks well to the right, half-way up the western slope of the Santa Inez mountain range, he will see, nearly hidden by an intervening grove of trees, a low, white house of Mexican appearance. To reach it, he must take the first turn to the right away from the well-worn post-road, and drive down a narrow, dirt lane which leads through fields of orange-dyed poppies and paler mustard-flowers to a white, wooden gate. And the gate, standing at the end of an avenue bordered by two rows of pepper-trees, directs the stranger to the house which lies a few hundred yards off. Here, before venturing to the front door, he would do well to halt and scrutinize what lies before him.

The house is evidently not old, though built at different periods, for it has a rambling look, as though added to as occasion arose, when the owner of the house felt a desire for more space. Whatever the building-material of the house may be, it is coated entirely with stucco. The whole structure is but one-story high. Built round a court, and yet jutting out from it at odd and unexpected angles, it presents the appearance of a Mexican farm-house converted into a modern American dwelling by one whose desire lies

MARION MANNING

in comfort and picturesque beauty rather than in strict conformity to architectural style. The house is made beautiful by the flowers which, in places, have smothered its white aspect and covered its walls or the pillars of its verandas with a curtain of green but also vivid-colored creepers. Blue heliotrope has climbed the roof at one place, and spreads its luxuriant growth in the sunshine with western vigor. Red and yellow roses, scarlet passion vine, fuchsias also, seem to have unlimited space over which to creep and cling; and from one wing of the house, stretching to a distant cottage some half a mile away, and bordering the path which leads to it, a hedge of glorious calla lilies exults in seemingly wild splendor. One wall alone of the house is bare of flowers, and from that one four long windows open out onto the green lawn. There are piazzas to the right and the left of it, but this wall meets the sun squarely and unflinchingly. If the traveller will now walk to those same windows, which are wide open, and will peer inside, he will see that two of them give into a dark-panelled library, or smoking-room, and two into a cool-looking, green-tinted dining-room.

One morning towards the latter part of May, at about half-past eight o'clock, a gray-haired man sat at table in the dining-room eating his breakfast, while behind him stood a Chinaman in an immovable attitude. The man ate silently; the Chinaman watched intently. Presently the former raised his head and turned to the mute servant.

"Those are devilish good cakes, Ling! Think I'll have some more." The Chinaman grinned, and, nodding his head repeatedly, left the room.

Meanwhile, out of the back windows of the dining-room a very different scene was being enacted. A large man in riding toggery, with one hand on the

MARION MANNING

collar of a big yellow-and-black retriever, was frowning furiously at a small, dark-skinned person who was standing before him, with eyes furtively glancing round as if in dire need of escape.

"How dare you, you miserable scoundrel!" he was saying, in an angry voice. "How often have I told you not to lay hands on that dog? If ever I catch you kicking him again, or hurting him in any way, I'll turn you off this place in a twinkling, and you won't forget that day, either. Now be off with you until you're wanted, and don't come round here again." The servant, or farm-hand, for such his looks rather declared him to be, sullenly turned away, crossed the grassy court-yard, and went through an arched opening which led into the stables. The man with the dog followed him with his eyes till he disappeared; then, with his hand still on the retriever's collar, went into the dining-room.

"Hullo, George, where have you been to?" inquired he who sat at the table.

"Been and lost my temper famously!" was the rejoinder. "What do you suppose? I caught that scoundrel Pedro kicking and ill-treating Dan! It's an infernal outrage! Come here, old fellow. Why didn't you go for him, Dan?" The dog sat on his haunches and looked affectionately at his master, while the latter scratched his ears.

"Who is Pedro?" the older man asked, adding, "Come and have breakfast."

"Pedro!" answered the other, going to the side-board and helping himself to a plateful of strawberries. "He's a half-breed—half Mexican, half Indian—and the best guide you have ever known. I don't know a better man this side of the Rockies for tracking bear. That's why I keep him. But, besides that, he's a scoundrel—a lazy, good-for-nothing liar; and

MARION MANNING

for some reason or other he's always hated Dan." The speaker seated himself at the table and was covering his strawberries with thick cream when the pantry door opened and the Chinaman appeared with a big plate of steaming buckwheat-cakes, which he placed before the man whom we first saw. He laughed.

"Well, George, and what do you think of my appetite? That's the third plateful Ling has brought me. Isn't it, Ling?"

Ling smiled all over as he looked at George; then, nodding his head, and pointing at the other: "He likee nice cakee, plentee cakee!"

The gentlemen both laughed.

"Go tell the cook that my turn's still coming," the younger said, "and that I'm to have as many as the General."

Ling departed, shaking his head from side to side this time. The General started in on his cakes.

"George," he said, "I don't see why you keep that man Pedro if he's such a bad lot. He might play you a nasty trick some day."

"Well, you see, it's this way. Pedro is like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. When he's hunting—on the war-path, I suppose he calls it—he's as keen and brave and useful as Jekyll; but in times of peace, when he's idle, all his evil passions come to the front. But I put up with them simply because he's invaluable to me in the mountains."

"Are you still as keen about big game as you were?" asked his companion.

"Just; there's nothing like it. Next time I go off, General, you must come with me, and we'll track a grizzly for you."

"I'm too old for that now; safer game's more my kind," the General said; "but how about that one you shot a year ago?"

MARION MANNING

"There he is!" A huge skin and great head lay before the fireplace. "Remember him, eh, Dan? Close shave it was, too!" And he began to relate adventures in the mountains and his experiences with first one and then another furred inhabitant of the wilds, stopping every now and then to point to mounted heads on the wall. "General," he continued, finishing his breakfast—his companion having already lit a cigar—"do you know that I never took it up or cared about it till about five years ago, but it caught hold of me at once, and now it's got a pretty tight grip of me."

"Tighter than politics?" laughed the General.

"Well, one's play, the other's work! Come outside and smoke," he continued, and led the way out of the front windows.

"What a view!" the other exclaimed. "I never can get used to it."

"Neither can I," the younger man said, in a lower voice. They looked silently at the panorama outspread before them. A green stretch of lawn sloped down the hill below them in uninterrupted sweep for several hundred yards. On its left was the avenue of pepper-trees, on its right a forest, palms and shrubs in the foreground, behind which firs and live-oak stretched to the summit of the first hill. Below the lawn were yellow and orange fields, green leas and straggling trees, then precipitate slopes and stony grounds covered with cactus, and lower still the great, undulating, fertile country which led to the sea. Houses dotted here and there, little adobe huts or larger mission churches, small and large wooden cottages, and farms nestling among protecting clumps of pepper or eucalyptus trees; fields of grain, pale-green or yellow; orchards stretching acres of white and pink blossoms to meet the morning sun, almond-trees, peach-

MARION MANNING

trees or dark groves of heavy-leaved orange, whose shade from the distance looked gloomy and impenetrable; at irregular intervals, straight, curved, or winding white chalk-lines which indicated roads, and, farther beyond, a glowing haze of sunshine over everything, which made shapes indistinct and varieties indistinguishable; then, farther still, a straight, filmy line of gray-blue—the Pacific Ocean.

The two men had seated themselves in large chairs facing the view; Dan was leaning against his master, who absently stroked his head.

"Splendid, isn't it?" he finally said, looking straight ahead of him. "There's nothing like it anywhere outside of California. You might live a hundred years and never see anything like this, and then you mightn't be a part of it; it mightn't belong to you! Senator, it's good to be a Californian, to be an American, to own something like that! And yet, there are lots of people who have no feeling about it at all—whose blood doesn't thrill at the sight of it. One can only console one's self with the thought that they must be soulless, that they have no breadth of patriotism in them—" He interrupted himself.

"You're right, George—right," the General said, sadly. "But why think about such encumbrances of the earth?" he added, more briskly. "They're not the people who'll ever do anything, who could have helped to make America, or will add one single jot to her greatness—bah! why waste a breath on them. George Hood, you're in the other camp from me, but I'll be hanged if you're not on the right track!" He looked at the young man affectionately and admiringly. The latter turned to him.

"General," he said—"well, well! you understand all right." He lit a cigarette. "But, by the holy saints!" he continued, with a laugh, "do you know

MARION MANNING

what you said?—you, a Republican Senator! That I'm on the right track—I, a misguided Democrat!"

General Owens laughed. "Not as a Democrat, young man—don't worry! There's vast room for improvement in you on that score. I was speaking on more general lines," he went on, in sententious tones—"as regards your domestic and moral character. Don't you intrude politics on me this fine May morning, when the burdens of office have been off my shoulders for a full week."

Hood lazily stretched himself in his chair and pulled Dan's ears. "Why, Dan, you lazy beggar, what are you blinking at, this hour of the day? Are *you* relieved from cares of office, too?"

General Owens meditatively surveyed the horizon. "By-the-way," he said, "I saw Mrs. Manning yesterday."

Hood knocked off the ashes from his cigarette on the side of his chair. "Did you?" he said; then he turned to him. "What Mrs. Manning? Where?"

"Don't you remember John Manning's wife in Washington two years ago?" the General asked. "You must have met her before he died. Of course you did. I remember that she once asked me about you."

"What is she doing here?" the younger man inquired.

"She's at Santa Barbara with a party. Mrs. Caring, one of the English secretaries—Leverich—and a few others. She has been travelling all the time, practically, since Manning died. She was a year in Europe, or more, then went round the world, and is on her way home now. The others met her here, except Mrs. Caring, I think, who travelled with her." Hood was silent. "Why don't you ask them up here?" General Owens continued.

"Do you suppose she'd like to come?" was the reply.

MARION MANNING

"Come! Who wouldn't jump at an invitation to see this place? You're too modest, George; but you can't be modest about the view."

"No," the owner of the view assented. "It's good enough for anybody!"

Hood acted on the suggestion, and sent a letter that afternoon to invite Mrs. Manning to San Jacinto.

Two years had passed since that April morning in Washington when John Manning's career and life had been brought to a close. Unexpected as the great events of this mortal existence are apt to be, his death had yet been a shock to all who were interested in him, and even those who had never known him bewailed the blight which had fallen on great promise. For, if he had lived, few doubted that he would have made his name famous. Some few had whispered, at the time of his success, that his ambition was too great for visible attainment, and that it might drag him further than he thought on a road which did not always lead upward. But all had admitted his talents and his ability, and the success which had followed his footsteps, and his party had mourned the loss of a brilliant associate and future leader. It might have been said of him when his life was over, as has been said before, that, whatever his faults, he yet had had the elements of greatness in him, and that such elements are not vouchsafed to every man. Whether he had made the most of those elements may be doubted; in this world's judgment he probably had; in another's, it is hard to say, because of such things no knowledge is given to us here. But that he had achieved a palpable something was true, undoubtedly; and, even if a personal ambition only had prompted his acts, his work had not been in vain, for he had set an example of hard-working, untiring zeal to every young man whose mind was filled with thoughts of a future. His faults had been

MARION MANNING

the results of his ambition. His worst fault, a cold-blooded calculation, and a disdain of whatever obstacle might lie in his way, had proved the wrecking of his domestic happiness, or, rather, of the happiness of her who had trusted all she had to his care. If, however, she had loved him less blindly, she might have kept him longer, and held a stronger influence over him; but she had been an innocent, trustful girl, who was no match for his experience and determination. Be it as it may, it had been a piteous mistake from beginning to end; but he was dead now, and his failings and failures had become a part of that which is gone—a past irretrievable and irrevocable.

And two years had passed since what that was earthly of him had been put away—hidden from all sight.

John Manning, Congressman—*Requiescat in pace.*

But what of Marion during all this time? Shortly after her husband's death she had gone to Heveril Manor, and, after two quiet months there, had left America, with Molly Hart for a travelling companion, to seek diversion and change of scene in Europe. There they had wandered from one country to another, seeing sights, and new, strange faces, living the life of those with whom they dwelt for the nonce, and putting aside from them all associations of once familiar things. This had been Marion's wish, and the girl had respected and sympathized with what she deemed a most natural feeling. So they, like birds of some lengthier passage, had gathered and gleaned what knowledge and interest they found on their path, learning with avidity all things new, forbearing to look back to former oft-trodden roads. At least, one of them did so; the other may have enjoyed some retrospective pleasure. As the months had lengthened they had met new people, and seen more of the social

MARION MANNING

aspect of the places through which they passed; then old friends had come to join the new. They both learned many things in their journeys and broadened their scope of thought and intelligence, while making, unawares, it may be, the Old World a little richer for their presence. Molly had not remained with Marion all the time that she was away from America, for when the latter was joined by her father, who, after much persuasion, had at last ventured to leave Virginia and his beloved estate for three months, she had returned home. Later, Marion had joined Mrs. Carling and a party of friends, and had spent a winter in India and Japan; now she was slowly wending her way back to Heveril and the Eastern States, where she must, after her long restlessness, take up a quiet life again.

All this, perhaps, General Owens told Hood, as they sat that evening under the stars, smoking and talking.

"They say," the old man remarked, "she was dreadfully cut up when Manning died. She simply adored him, you know. She has never been heard to speak his name since, or to allow it mentioned in her presence. I suppose she travelled to try to forget it all. I wonder if she will ever like any one again? They generally do. I don't suppose that she is different from the others."

Hood smoked silently for a moment. "I don't know," he said, at last; "she doesn't look like a woman who could care twice."

"I hear that Sir James Leverich is after her; whether for love or money no one knows, but he's very devoted, they say. Wonder if she'd look at him?"

His companion delivered himself of a remark lacking brilliancy: "How can you tell beforehand?"

II

"And o'er the past oblivion stretch her wing."

—POPE.

MRS. MANNING and her friends came to San Jacinto, as the Senator had predicted, and the day of their visit remained for many months a red-letter day in the quiet annals of Hood's home. In later years, as George Hood looked back to that May day, and when the details of its passing had almost faded from his memory, two distinct impressions still remained with him, impressions which, at the time, had given him the totally opposite sensations of pleasure and pain. The first impression was caused by the sight of Marion as she alighted from the coach which had brought her and her friends from Santa Barbara, and as she stood before him, a tall, graceful figure, in a white dress, with smiling lips and bright eyes. Though only two years had passed since the time of their last meeting, he yet was not prepared for so much loveliness. For she was undoubtedly more beautiful than she had been, and more beautiful, he thought, than any one he had ever remembered seeing. What had wrought the change in her? For change there was from the girl of two years back, with her unconscious grace and her lovely features. Then she had been pretty—a dream ideal, quickened to life; but now she was beautiful, with a vivid and a startling beauty. There was an atmosphere of attraction about her, also, which had not been there, a conscious sense of power,

MARION MANNING

a charm which he soon realized might be dangerous. Her presence and her beauty gave Hood a sharp tinge of joy, and on looking back upon that scene he remembered that he was not the only one to experience pleasure when with her, for that Marion had been the light of them all that day he very well knew. Even old Senator Owens had been subjugated by her, and when the strangers had left, and he and Hood were alone together, he had told him that, had he been ten years younger, he could not have resisted having a "try for her."

This remark had annoyed Hood unaccountably.

The second impression occurred a little later in the day. The master of the house, and his guests, having been all over the place and explored its hidden beauties, were standing on the grass terrace before the house. They were all talking. Marion alone was silent, with eyes gazing west.

George Hood moved to her side. "What do you see?" he said to her, smiling.

"See?" She turned and faced him mechanically and looked in his face. "See?" she repeated, then her face changed and she laughed. "Not more than you do ; but it's enough. What a glorious view!"

But Hood was startled by that momentary glimpse of her face—that short glimpse into her eyes. If he had afterwards tried to explain what he had seen to any one else it would have been difficult, because he could not quite define it to his own satisfaction. But what came nearer to the truth of accurate description was the one word which he kept repeating to himself all day. "Mirrors, mirrors!" They were like mirrors, her eyes—beautiful mirrors. "But there would be nothing there in the dark," he said to himself again and yet again.

MARION MANNING

He looked at the woman beside him, and there was great pity in his eyes.

Later, Mrs. Caring, who was one of the party, spoke to him on the subject which was perplexing his mind. "Do you know Mrs. Manning well?" she asked.

They were walking in the palm grove, at some little distance from the others.

"No; I only met her twice, two years ago. A slight acquaintance you would call it, I suppose."

"I was wondering whether you would think that she had changed or not," she went on. "Lots of people don't notice it, but I see it plainly. That marriage with John Manning was a fatal thing for her."

"Why?" he could not refrain from asking. "Wasn't she happy with him?"

"Blissfully, at first. That was the trouble. She thought this world was heaven, and all the rest of it. It couldn't last, as you might imagine. Something happened. What, I don't know; but the beautiful picture she had made of John got scratched. Well, as she could not believe in him any longer she gave up believing in the rest of the world. A natural consequence, I suppose you'd say; but it was sad for her. What she suffered no one knows; but now she is as gay and eager to do things as any one. She likes everything she disliked before, and flirts now in what I think entirely too deliberate a way. It's a pity for her, because she is too good for that sort of thing. Fancy enjoying what she would have scorned before!"

"Poor woman," Hood said, under his breath.

"Oh, I am glad to hear you say that," Mrs. Caring resumed, eagerly, "because I think it is pathetic not to care for the things she used to care for, and to be moved by nothing. She is enthusiastic in a way still, but I don't think things which appeal to the emotions move her—that!" She snapped her fingers.

MARION MANNING

Thus did Marion Manning awaken pleasure, and pain also, in the mind of a man who for many years had banished women from the intimate association of his life, and had lived his day far removed from their influence.

It will not be easy to describe the change that had taken place in Marion's nature during the last two years, and yet some such attempt must be made, for, not only outwardly, but inwardly as well, was she a different being from the one who had been Marion Heveril—and later John Manning's wife. It would seem that, with her husband's death, her capacities for suffering had been strained to their utmost, and that when she had recovered from the shock which Mrs. Walford's presence and actions at his death-bed had given her, something in her had broken, snapped by a strain which had proved too great for her to bear. Then it was that she changed, and that slowly out of the physical wreck of what she had been the new Marion Manning came. So slowly did the change come that those nearest to her did not see it till many months had passed; but she was conscious of it from the beginning. She knew that suffering had passed out of her, and that in its place there was—nothing. And then, at that time also she suddenly saw herself clearly: saw that she was beautiful, that she had charm and intelligence above the many; saw, besides, that the world was about her and that life could be made easy. She deliberately set to work to make it as easy as she could, and to eliminate all that was unpleasant from it. And she began to plan for the future—not dream, as she had done, but plan logically, and with clear sight. She decided that she would travel and see new sights and people—that she would win as much legitimate pleasure as she could from her surroundings—that she would cultivate the art of pleas-

MARION MANNING

ing, and that she would be a woman whose society would be sought after and whose influence would be recognized. She confided her views to no one, because, from a dependent, clinging girl, she had become a woman possessed of great self-confidence and strength, who knew that she could stand alone, and decided that she would do so. Through this change her principles remained immovable. She thought right was right and wrong was wrong as she had thought; but she looked at the world through what she considered wider eyes, and neither criticised nor judged any more. But with the suffering, something else also went out of her nature—the desire for love, or any corresponding emotion. “I have finished with such things,” she said to herself, “and I am glad.”

The winter which followed her visit to California and to San Jacinto which I have just described, saw her settled once again in Washington. Not alone, for her father was with her; nor in the house in Farragut Square this time, but in a new, large house in Massachusetts Avenue. She had bought it that autumn, and had already partly furnished it with the products of two years' gleanings in foreign lands. She had chosen this particular house because the architecture was simple and dignified, and she proceeded to make the interior as individual and beautiful as could be done. She did not work alone, for Sir James Leverich was a good connoisseur, and one or two other friends advised and helped. They found her fastidious, however, and determined. She was eager for real knowledge, but wished no alien taste to make her house beautiful, and she threw her whole energies into the task which she had set herself. She read books on *les styles français et étrangers*, and became almost a purist on art and furniture. And yet in one of her severely classic drawing-rooms she would introduce a note sometimes

MARION MANNING

of barbaric incongruity. Thus her old nature, which had had its uncontrolled, disorderly moments, would still at times assert itself and leave a mark on her present calm, well-ordered system of life which her strongest inclination could not prevent. She spent money without stint, not rashly, but well, and Colonel Heveril marvelled at the prices she sometimes paid for objects which to him were useless, and not always ornamental extravagances. He saw, however, that her work interested her, and did not try to deter her from it. He had not yet left off wondering at the complexities of her character, nor at the changes which a turn of fortune had affected in her temperament. She was a different woman from the girl he had brought up, and he never ceased tormenting himself with solutions to the riddle of her destiny, which he acknowledged were yet beyond the solving. He had consented, after a struggle only, to accept her invitation to spend the winter with her, for Washington had never been a favorite spot of his, owing to old memories of war days, and she had candidly told him that he must not only forgive old injuries but accept new facts. For her sake he had done so, tearing himself from his retreat of solitude to seek the perhaps greater loneliness of the crowd. He noticed with regret, however, soon after his arrival at his daughter's house, that his old influence over her had ended, and that she followed her own path uninfluenced by his most solicitous, fatherly advice. She was very lovable to him, though, tending him with the greatest care; but she never invited him to enter, any more deeply than the others, the hard casing of reserve which she had wrapped round herself. Once, when he remonstrated with her as to a verdict which she had pronounced on one of his most time-honored homilies, she had said to him, "Well, father, we must each have our own opinions, as we must

MARION MANNING

each lead our own lives, though the world wags on just the same, however we think and whatever way we live." And she had turned the subject with a shrug of her shoulders, and had called his attention to a Whistler etching which she had just received.

Leverich was with her constantly, and the world naturally talked of their friendship; but she did not heed its gossip, and only Sir James himself knew how little hope the future held out to him where love, at least, was concerned. Many a time he laid at her feet all he owned—himself and his love; but each time she firmly, if in a kindly voice, bid him return to the safer basis of true friendship. "I shall never marry again. I couldn't possibly care for any one. You can offer me nothing. Let things stay as they are." And they had stayed. And he was still at her elbow, ready to come or go as her finger beckoned. But while she refused his offers of marriage, yet the sensation of being loved was not distasteful to her vanity, and she did not send him from her. He was useful, a good companion, a tried friend—why lose what was hers without the asking? And he cared so much—whether in the right way or the wrong, others will judge—that he was content to take the crumbs she gave him, not judging, but perhaps faintly clinging to the belief that while life lasts hope is yet unfailing. Meanwhile he studied interior decoration and bric-à-brac, and forgot his ambitions.

Before long Marion drew a circle round herself of men worth knowing and worth listening to; men in politics, of literary and journalistic reputation; those who were agreeable, or musical, or clever; those she liked, and also those who liked her. The art of pleasing came to her as second nature, the art of drawing out and interesting she cultivated with marked success. To receive her guests she had made her house beautiful;

MARION MANNING

but she also added comfort to the big library for the enticement of wearied bodies; then she studied to become intellectually able to cope with those whom she desired to surround herself with. Of women, she was intimate with few. Molly Hart remained in Boston. Mrs. Caring alone ventured to intrude at all hours and seasons. "You may be getting so clever that I appear but a mere contemptible woman to you," she said to her once, "and I may prefer to spend money on a Davenport sofa, where I can sleep comfortably with a book, than on a Louis XV. console; but as I have seen you grow up, I consider myself entitled to see you grow—"

"Down?" interrupted Marion, with a laugh.

"I didn't say what," answered her friend. "You yourself are the best judge of that."

Congress met early in December, and with it George Hood came to Washington. The first three weeks in December passed, however, before he went to see Marion Manning.

It was Christmas Eve, in the late afternoon. A cold, harsh wind was whistling through the streets, a thin coating of snow lay on the ground and covered the house-tops. Massachusetts Avenue looked deserted; only a few carriages sped by; there were no pedestrians in sight. Hood shook the snow-dust from his coat as he was ushered into the brilliantly lighted marble hall, and a moment later was shown into a little drawing-room, which was empty. It was one of the rooms on which Marion had spent the most time and thought, and it was of pure and very perfect style. The walls were gray and white; a soft, mellow-tinted rug was on the parquet floor; the furniture was of graceful Louis XVI. design, had he known it, and palely shaded electric lights shone from candles on bronze wall appliques. On one of the walls were hung two glass-covered portraits of ladies in brocade and

MARION MANNING

powder; facing them was a white, carved wood mantel of rare beauty. There were mantel ornaments, too, made of marble and bronze, rare flowered china, a small tapestry fire-screen. But the man standing amidst so much that was beautiful noticed nothing. And when the door opened and she came in, clad all in deep red, with violets at her throat, and said, "How do you like it?" he thought of her only, and answered, "I couldn't like it better." They shook hands.

"Look," she continued, "it is all Louis XVI.; pure, too, they say, and I think I have made it pretty. I bought those two pastels at the sale of the effects of an old château in France. And those appliques are really old; I got them there, too. And the screen. Hard for them, wasn't it, to have to sell them? But I was the gainer. Won't you sit down?"

George Hood looked round the room slowly and then back at her. "Some time," he said, "you will have to explain all these things to me. I am afraid that I am rather lacking in knowledge of them. They never taught those things at school or at college, and since then—well, I've been busy, and haven't paid much attention."

As he spoke he drew a straight-backed, tapestry-covered chair to her side, but she jumped up hastily from the little sofa where she was sitting.

"No, I want to show you the rest of the house first," she said, "and if you want to learn you must come here often for lessons."

"I shall come," he answered, as he followed her from the room.

She led him into another large drawing-room, but would not do more than let him have a brief glance round, and then they went into the library.

"What a nice room!" he exclaimed, as he moved to the fireplace. It was a high, dark, wainscoted

MARION MANNING

room with tall bookcases, and great chairs and sofas, and big tables littered with books and papers. A wood-fire burned on the hearth, and Marion threw herself into a large arm-chair facing it.

"Please smoke," she said; "there are cigarettes on that table. Oh, don't mind," as he demurred. "Every one smokes here. It's Liberty Hall! Do, please; I like it," she insisted, and as he complied she went on. "I am glad you came; I was wondering whether you would. How different this is from San Jacinto."

"I have been working hard," he explained, as he divined the tact which had led her to take him from the surroundings which were less congenial to those which she knew would be attractive to him. "I took too long a holiday in the Rockies this summer, and it left me arrears of work to make up. Besides, the first few weeks after Congress meets are hard; to find out where you are takes time."

"Have you spoken in the House yet?" she asked; "you will let me know when you do, won't you? I remember so well," she went on, "the impression which the only speech I have ever heard you make made on me. I am wondering whether the next one I hear will excite me as much."

"Probably not at all," he said, with his eyes fixed on her, while a certain strain of surprise crossed his mind that she should allude, as she did, to the speech which had been directed against her husband. Perhaps his voice dimly betrayed his thoughts, because she turned her eyes to him, which had been staring at the fire, with sudden curiosity.

"Do you," she asked, and then evidently changed her mind—"do you still belong to the boys' club in Georgetown?" They talked for a long time, and she appeared amused and interested by his conversa-

MARION MANNING

tion, and very pleased that he should have come to see her.

"Christmas Eve," he said, finally, as he rose to go and stood looking down at her, watching the firelight play with the red velvet of her dress and cast pink reflections on the white brilliancy of her skin—"and to-morrow is Christmas!"

"Two years ago," she said, with half-closed eyes, "I went to midnight mass at St. Peter's, in Rome. It was very beautiful and impressive. I wished then that I had been a Rembrandt, to paint it all—the candle-lights on the high altar, and the darkness around. Because it was all black, except for that one bright spot of light! Weird, too, it was, and worth seeing! the chiaroscuro effect and the people: the devotional Catholics, and then all the sight-seers! When we came out of the cathedral and stood on the steps before the Piazza, the bells of St. Peter's were ringing. It was very cold, I remember, and there were stars in the sky, and it was Christmas Day. . . . That's two years ago." She talked quietly, without a retrospect emotion, conveying only to her listener the feeling that the art and poetry of it had appealed to her æsthetic sense.

"It's the same Christmas here," he said, very gently, "and there are as great lights and shadow effects in this new land as in the Eternal City."

"I suppose so," she said, "but they are not apparent. The charm is over there."

He did not wish her a merry Christmas as he left, but simply said good-bye, and walked away.

III

*"O God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood."*

—BYRON

GEORGE HOOD could not banish the thought of Marion from his mind that entire evening. He thought of her as he walked home in the sleet and snow, as he sat alone at dinner, and when he faced the fire in his library, until the dim hours of the night. She aroused in him all the chivalrous instincts which, far beneath the exterior covering, formed the background of his temperament and largely influenced his actions. He was sorry for her; he felt that she needed protection; that she should be aroused from her present state of content, and given vitality again. He realized that the existence which she was leading, and meant to lead, would stifle the best that had been in her; that intellect, in her case, would narrow and restrict her, and would deaden her natural feelings. "She is forcing herself to forswear what nature meant should be hers," he thought, "and to make pleasure and ambition, instead of pastimes, ruling elements in her life. I am sure there is something else in her that's softer. She has gone through a lot, and it's made her different, that's the trouble! I wonder whether she has forgotten all about it now, or whether she still feels it. She is so unruffled." But they were riddles not to be solved in an evening, and George's thoughts reverted to his own life.

MARION MANNING

He thought of the girl whom he had loved, years back, who had jilted him. He remembered what a severe blow her faithlessness had been to him, how it had almost wrecked his life, his enthusiasms, his beliefs; and, then, how it had made him — made him virile, strong, able to meet knocks, and to resist them; how it had brought him to the ground, and then had raised him higher than he had been, with a deeper love of country and a stronger belief in friendship and in man. In short, how it had awakened him to a true sense of the relation of things to each other, and to the knowledge that the shadows and the darkness on the earth's face are very close to the high lights and to radiant points of brilliancy. He had realized then that happiness is not for every man, happiness as he first wills it, but that living and doing can make existence a glorious thing. And he had stepped into politics.

The one who had done this for him, who had saved him from the pitfalls he might have fallen into, was a friend, a man, and, strange to say, an old Franciscan monk from the San Gabriel Mission at Los Angeles. Hood was not a Roman Catholic, but this monk, Father Augustin, had rescued him when a little boy from the imminent peril of a runaway horse, and by so doing had won his eternal affection and gratitude. After his mother's death, Father Augustin became the boy's only confidant, and with him he discussed ambitions and projects which he would have blushed to disclose to any of his young companions. An added charm to the boy was the Franciscan's never-failing sense of humor, which caused George often to forget that his friend was old enough to be his father. There was also a worldly wisdom in the priest's nature which saved his good advice from the narrow philosophy of a monastery. When the girl George Hood was engaged

MARION MANNING

to left him, to run away with another man, and when his whole reason for living was crushed out of him, Father Augustin came quietly to the fore, and, with rare tact and wisdom saved the lad from cynicism and gave him courage to face sorrow—which all must face in one guise or another ; inciting him also, by the valors and deeds of other men, to make the most of the powers which were his. So that Hood entered into political life with the best intentions, having high ideals, but yet the realization of lower ones, about him ; knowing that in politics one must play fair and square and high against odds which are often false and crooked and low. He never abased himself to the level of those to whom political life is a tool for personal or for financial success, but he held firmly before him the resolve to benefit his country in every way which came within his power. And yet he was a dreamer, an idealist, for in his moments of enthusiasm he would often picture the accomplishment of reforms which were not practical, and forecast a state of national prosperity which was only possible in a Utopia. But his political success lay most largely in his enormous capacity for work, and in the staying qualities of his purposes. He had a great power of concentration, a capability of absorbing and engrossing himself in whatever matter he was at the moment engaged in, whether it was politics, or sport, or anything else, and that power largely helped him in his work. He was not popular, in the ordinary sense of the word, and he had many enemies ; but to counterbalance them some few friends whose affection and loyalty would be his always. He knew few women, perhaps dimly mistrusting them, and even in the interest which he was now bestowing on Mrs. Manning some of the uncertainty of his past opinions lingered. He was attracted by her strongly ; her beauty gave him keen pleasure ; she piqued his interest and his

MARION MANNING

curiosity; but secretly, with the feeling of pity for her which he experienced, was also a slight, unexplainable fear that her charm might cast an unfortunate influence over him, in a future not too remote for legitimate anticipation.

A full month passed before he called on her again, after which visit his resolves of prudence vanished and he was drawn nearer to her, in the name of friendship first, later in that of love. He became her friend and her adviser; he confided his schemes and hopes to her. But he worked just the same in the House and in committee-rooms as he had worked before, and his colleagues found him never so strong, so earnest, nor so determined in his endeavors to help his party and his country. He was one of the Democratic leaders in the House, and he did not disappoint his adherers and his enthusiastic partisans—although, for the first time since the beginning of his Congressional career, he began to go into society.

Marion liked him from the outset, and was proud to have drawn him from his seclusion and to have attached him to her. She felt that, as an intimate friend, he would satisfy her requirements far better than Leverich; because she learned many new things from him, and because he was a type of man that is uncommon, and far above the average. Hood and Colonel Heveril, after their first hand-shake, liked each other, each recognizing in the other the qualities he admired; so that, with the additional pressure brought to bear upon her by her father, Marion was not slow to urge an hospitable welcome to George Hood.

Their conversations in those first days of intercourse were interesting to both, but they lacked the personal touch which adds charm to interest. Marion avoided all the ways which might lead to personalities, and hid her real self behind what he thought a barrier of re-

MARION MANNING

serve. He had almost forgotten the unpleasant impression which he had received the previous spring from the careless glance of her eyes, when it was recalled to him one day with startling intensity. They were talking together, and she was relating to him the sad case of a social acquaintance whose happiness had been wrecked and her life ruined by the brutality of her husband. This man had been engaged in a vulgar intrigue with a woman of the lowest character, and so as to blind his wife and to prevent her jealousy, he was systematically rude and cruel to her, at the same time bringing to the house and forcing his wife to cultivate the society of a friend of his, of physical and social attraction, but with a loose sense of morals.

"He threw them together," Marion said, "knowing what would happen. His wife was unhappy—weak. You may imagine the result. Well, the unfortunate thing was that when his affair with the other woman was finished he pretended to find out what couldn't have been a secret to him before, got into a fearful temper, and turned his wife out of the house. Pretty, wasn't it?"

"Damnable!" exclaimed Hood. "I beg your pardon," he continued, "but it's so horrible that I couldn't help getting excited about it. What's happened to the husband?"

"Oh, nothing; he goes about the same as ever. A few people won't have anything to do with him, but most of them speak to him, and ask him to their houses."

"What an outrage!" her visitor cried. "A brute like that deserves horse-whipping. To throw his wife deliberately in the way of temptation, and to ill-treat her at the same time! Why, it's beyond conception! What's happened to her?"

"Poor thing, I don't know," Marion said, languidly;

MARION MANNING

"gone off with the other man—I suppose. He won't stick to her long, however."

Hood walked up and down the room. "It's things like that that make one disgusted with one's fellow-mortals. I have often blamed women, mistrusted them, you know, but, by Jove! I believe that half the time it's not their fault. Do you know, Mrs. Manning," he went on, "that a society which countenances such things isn't only bad and rotten, but it has a worse influence on the public at large than a corrupt political machine. I would rather, I assure you, shake hands, and sit down to dinner with an underbred, coarse, political gag, whose business is to buy and bribe other men's votes, than with a brute like that who calls himself a gentleman, and is received by half the people you know. For that's revolting!"

Marion lifted her eyes to him, and they were like glass. "Why, Mr. Hood," she said, "one would think that she had been a friend of yours!"

"A friend?" He stopped short and stared at her, while his brow gathered suddenly. "I don't understand," he said; "would you mind explaining?" He spoke in a cold voice, and his eyes looked black and hard.

Immediately she regretted her words, and glanced at him hesitatingly. "I don't know," she faltered, disconcerted by his expression. "I meant—you took such an interest—and, after all, so many horrid things happen every day—to so many people." He looked interrogatively at her still. She went on, as if impelled to speak. "They don't excite me any more—now."

"Why not? What are you trying to do to yourself?" he asked, sternly. "Trying to kill everything that is soft in you, every womanly, kindly feeling? It won't make life any easier for you if you do, nor give you more friends."

MARION MANNING

She stared at him with a disturbed look. "I don't try," she said, finally. "I am perfectly natural, quite myself. Things don't affect me much—that's all."

Then she jumped up and began to poke the fire. He did not speak, and, after a moment or two, she turned round and faced him. "Do you think I am not worth having as a friend?"

"Mrs. Manning, don't say that," he cried, moving nearer to her. "I am not good at understanding women. That's the trouble. Believe me, I want to be your friend, if you will have me. You must forgive me if I was rough—only"—he hesitated a moment—"sit down, please; I want to talk to you." She obeyed silently, and he took a chair near to her. "Only," he went on, "I will tell you something about myself. I once cared for a girl—years ago—I thought she was everything a woman should be. Well, she threw me over. I found out that she was different. For a time everything went badly for me—then a friend dragged me up. I haven't let myself go down again. I have never seen much of women since. I don't know why, but I haven't; but I still think that the right women are good and true and noble. I want very much to be your friend, and I should prize it highly if you would be my friend. I think that you are one of those right women. But," he hesitated, "I suppose you will think me cold-blooded and selfish when I tell you that if I didn't think you were one of those women—well—I would rather not be a friend of yours. You see there's my work, and it has to be done, and if you are not what I think you are, if you are what you tried just then to pretend you were, why, it's much better that we shouldn't clash. It wouldn't help you; it would hurt me."

His foot tapped the ground, and there was a pause. Then she spoke, a little faintly.

MARION MANNING

"Then you had better go. I didn't pretend just now. I am not noble or good. I don't feel things as I did, and what's more," she added, with a strange vehemence, unlike her present ways, "I don't want to; I am quite content as I am. I don't want to be disturbed or reformed. If you are thinking of doing either—why, it is much better that we shouldn't clash, as you call it. Though, I must say," she laughed, satirically, "no man ever expressed such a wish to me before this!"

He looked at her fixedly and said, in a low tone: "Mrs. Manning, I beg your pardon; I had no right to speak as I did. It was rude and presumptuous on my part. But, you see, if I hadn't liked you I shouldn't have—" He rose and fumbled with his watch-chain. Her face had grown impassive again and her eyes sought the fire. He dreaded to see them turn to him. "I shouldn't have spoken as I did," he continued. "You are right, but I can't say more than that I beg your pardon, most humbly and sincerely." He went near to her, and stooped to lift her right hand from her lap. He held it for a moment, then let it drop. A strange, almost triumphant, smile came to his lips.

"I retract my words," he said, shortly; "for good or ill, in this world or the next, I will be your friend, though you can forbid your door to me, and probably will. Good-bye."

He was gone before she could answer him, and a moment later she heard the front door close.

She got up and began to move round the room. She was very angry again. "How could he dare to talk like that!" she thought. "What right had he? No, I will not be disturbed; but, after all," a smile crossed her face slowly, "no one can disturb me—I don't think there is anything to disturb—there." She put one hand to her heart.

She walked to the window, pulled the blind up, and

MARION MANNING

pressed her cheek against the cool window-pane. Then she drew the curtains together behind her, so that the light of the room was barred from her. "It's so long ago," she thought, "so, so long ago—since—since I felt things—there. Almost four years ago it was, in this same Washington, when everything began to change, I remember looking out of the window then in the dark, too, just after I had found out. It was so different. I am much happier now. Sometimes it's lonely, that's all. I wonder—? He's right. I should not do him any good—just the contrary. There's Leverich; he stays on here. He should have been promoted long ago. And Houghton; I don't know about him. He was here not long ago and I thought—poor Molly—I wonder whose fault it all is." She sighed and leaned her forehead against the window-glass.

The sound of her own name made her turn and throw back the curtains, thus disclosing her presence to Colonel Heveril, who had just come in. "Why, Marion, what are you doing?" he asked.

"It was so hot in here," she explained, "that I stood by the window for a moment. It's much cooler there."

The Colonel sank down in an arm-chair. "It's *very* cold out," he said; "I've just come in."

"Father, are you cold?" she asked, hurriedly going up to him and touching both his hands. "Why, they are icy," she continued. "You must have something hot at once."

"I do feel rather chilly," he admitted, "but I'll be all right soon."

She went to the bell and rang it. "Now let me move your chair nearer to the fire," she said; "there—that's better. Give me your hands now. Let me rub them. How could you get so cold?" She knelt down before him, and, as the servant appeared, she told him to bring some whiskey and some hot water.

MARION MANNING

"Father, how could you?" she said to him again. "Where have you been?" And she rubbed his old hands vigorously with her firm young ones.

"The only cab I could find," he explained, "when I left the club, was an automobile hansom. I suppose it was hot in the club, and the air outside was raw and penetrating. But I'll be all right soon. Don't you worry about me, my dear."

She stopped rubbing his hands and leaned her head against his knee, with her eyes fixed again on the red embers. He slowly stroked her hair. "Dear Marion," he said, softly; "thank God for having given you to me—my own daughter."

The door opened and a servant appeared with a tray and steaming glasses. Mrs. Manning jumped up from her knees to mix the hot drink, and then brought it to her father. "There," she said, with a faint tremor in her voice, "drink that as quickly as you can. I can't have you ill. You must obey my orders implicitly."

The old man smiled as he took the tumbler from her hands. "It's rather hot," he said, and he wrapped a handkerchief round it. Marion watched him as he drank it; when he had finished she took it from him.

"Do you feel warmer?" she asked, with an anxious look still on her face.

"Dear me, yes," the Colonel answered, heartily; "I feel hot inside and out now. One side of me is almost toasted by the fire, and I am sure that my tongue is burned."

Marion laughed as she bent down and kissed his forehead. "Do you know, father," she said, leaning over the back of his chair, and putting one hand on his shoulder, "that you are the best person in the world. That you are so good, so kind, so—" she stopped. Her eyes filled with tears. "You mustn't be too kind," she said, as she ran from the room.

IV

*"Those love her best who to themselves are true,
And what they dare to dream of, dare to do."*

—LOWELL.

LIFE itself being so complex, it would seem as if our chief endeavor should be to simplify our own course of action; to order to some logical, straight conclusion our wayfaring emotions: in one word, to restrict those faculties in us which must invariably cause change and turbulence. But if we do none of these things, and allow ourselves to drift whither the currents may impel, it is impossible to foretell the result of our own inaction. And George Hood reasoned in such wise to himself as he walked home from Mrs. Manning's house. Given his present state in relation to his own content, to the advancement of his career, or to the good of that for which he worked, and place in opposition to it an uncertain, dangerous attraction, which, in all probability, would make him unhappy, dissatisfied, unfit for work, perhaps even unheeding of the calls of duty. Such, he felt, was the influence which the woman whom he had just left might exert on him; such, he felt, was the influence which wisdom dictated that he should shun. Love of country had been his mistress up to the present day; under her guidance he had fared well and happily; she had kept him free from the disturbing element of the love of woman, and now—was he beginning to tire of her? He debated this point from all sides,

MARION MANNING

and for several days and nights tormented himself with the question which demanded an answer. And then one day, after a sleepless night, he saw the truth clearly, and stated it to himself with unsparing candor. He loved Marion. Not of his own volition or intention; up to now unconsciously but none the less really; not in opposition to the love of country, but side by side with it, only more imperatively, more exactly; in spite of uncertainty; in spite of ignorance of her nature, her inner self; in spite of the danger which that uncertainty made possible and which effectually was closing out the future from his far-reaching eyes: perhaps even because of all these things he felt that he loved her. And as he looked back it seemed to him as if he had always loved her, from that evening when he had first seen her at the crowded reception in the cabinet minister's house, three years back. Only, then he could have lived without her—but now—? He weighed the pros and cons of the situation dispassionately, coolly, as he thought, and tried to come to some decision as to his future. One purpose alone stood prominently forth in the agitation of his mind—the purpose of making her his; not his by right of the law and of the Church merely, but his by the power of her love for him. Yes, he would make her love him, and by so doing he felt strongly that he would save her from herself, and from the dangerous state of calm in which she was now living. She should live, he said to himself, to see happier days, to feel again the joy of life, the joy of being loved and of loving in return. He would give to her all that she had before lacked, all that she had wished for, and all that love was capable of giving.

Once determined, he asked but for one thing: the opportunity of seeing her and telling her how matters lay with him. He wrote a note to her, requesting an

MARION MANNING

interview; he wrote it in urgent words, and she granted his plea, because, though a trifle loath, she was yet curious as well, and so she named a day and an hour.

Her note reached him as he sat at his desk in the House of Representatives, and after he had read it and put it in his pocket he surveyed the familiar scene about him with a new resolve.

"I shall make her love it as I love it," he thought. "I shall make her see the spirit of it shining through the dark years; in the words of the great men who made the country and later saved it; above the uncouthness and corruptness of so much that lies on the surface. She shall shut her eyes and she shall see, as I do, men struggling and fighting for the right cause; she shall see earnest and disinterested endeavor; she shall see the light of achievement; and, higher than them all, America, as I see it—as I love it!" His eyes fell on men who were politically eager for advancement, who thought more of party than of high purpose, but they were but a sprinkling amid the great spirits of a century, and he forgot them, as he often forgot, in dealing with men, that their aspirations were not towards the ideal, but towards the earthly.

He was forcibly recalled to every-day matters by a resounding slap on the shoulder. He started up angrily, and turned round to face one of his fellow-Congressmen from California—who, besides, was a great friend and fellow-sportsman.

"If you could have seen your expression, my dear fellow," the man exclaimed, laughing, "you would have paid me to recall you to life. I assure you that I was afraid the Speaker would notice it."

George laughed. "Well, I didn't pay you, at any rate, and another time I should prefer a quieter greeting."

"What were you thinking about, anyway?" his friend queried.

MARION MANNING

"That, my dear man, is a matter which shall be brought to your attention in due time. I was thinking of your future."

The other laughed, and drew a chair up. "Look here, George, I have just heard that Hankle is going to camp two miles from our happy hunting-ground—out there. You know what that will mean?"

"What?" Hood exclaimed, turning to him with a frown. "It isn't possible! How the devil did he do it? I thought they'd all fought clear of him—made him go somewhere else."

"Well, you know what money will do. I suppose he persuaded old Merry that he wouldn't interfere with us."

"And of course he will!" George said, in a dejected voice. "He's no kind of a sportsman—brings a troop of people with him. Well, that's the end of that part of the mountains for us! What's to be done now?" He looked at his companion anxiously.

They talked for fully a half-hour, and for that time Marion was forgotten. But he remembered her as he got up to leave the hall. His face softened. "Yes, I can do it," he said to himself. "I can reconcile them all, and they won't clash. I won't let them clash."

It was a day towards the latter part of March that he paid his promised visit to Marion, and spring was in the air and the feeling of spring was in his heart. But there was deliberation in the manner in which he rang her bell, deliberation in his expression and his every gesture as he waited for her in the library and tried to curb his impatience at her delay.

She came in at last, however, quietly impassive but very beautiful, with a certain questioning look on her face as she shook hands with him.

"You wanted to see me?" she said, in rather a cold voice. She had not forgotten their last meeting. But

MARION MANNING

something in his expression, in the lines about his mouth, warned her that the coming interview might not shape itself wholly on the lines that she had willed. Despite his ugliness, his severity, there was such strength, physical and moral, in the man she faced, that, unwillingly, grudgingly though it might be, she experienced a feeling of admiration for him.

"Please sit down," he said, "because it may take a few minutes to tell you."

She was tempted to rebel; after their last meeting she had not expected such an authoritative tone, but she submitted, nevertheless. Then he sat down, too, with his eyes fixed on her face and his hands clasped together tightly. There was a pause. When he spoke his voice sounded deep and thrilling to her.

"I have been thinking a great deal, since I saw you last," he said, "about what I told you, and I have found out the truth—about myself. I didn't know it that day, but I know it now." He paused; his brows gathered and moved nervously. "I have found out that, whether you are the right kind of woman, as I said, or not, it makes no difference to me. It's too late for that now, and it's only you that's important, because—whatever you do or say will make no difference, because—because—I love you, Marion. I can't tell you how long it's been since I began to love you. I think since the day I first saw you. But it's all the same, because now—there's no changing. Don't say anything," as she tried to interrupt, "let me finish first, please. I expect nothing of you—yet. You don't care for me. You couldn't—and I can always wait. But I thought it fairer—to you," his voice trembled for the first time, "to tell you how much you mean to me."

Marion looked at him sadly, then she found words. "Mr. Hood, I can't tell you—I didn't expect—I didn't want this. I am sorry, I can't tell you how sorry."

MARION MANNING

"Don't," he said, gently, drawing his chair closer to hers and laying one of his hands on hers. "You mustn't blame yourself. It wasn't your fault. You couldn't have helped it, any more than I could have helped—loving you—as I do. Loving you for yourself, for the light that shines out of your eyes, for your beauty, for your heart, your soul, for your own self—Marion."

She had listened to him half frightened, half quiescent, but at his last words she pulled her hands away from him, and from under her long lashes shot a strange glance at him.

"You are very complimentary," she said, while her lips smiled, "but you are very blind."

"Tell me what you mean," he said, a little white.

"Oh, it isn't a nice story," she answered, very slowly, as if weighing each word, "and, after all, why should I lay myself bare to you?"

"Why?" he answered, passionately — "because, under heaven, you are the only thing I love in this world! I have lived on friendship all these years, and now I want something else. Oh, and I must have it, some time or other!" He stopped short, as if catching hold of himself, and with a change of key continued: "Won't you tell me about yourself? You know that you can trust me, because, though I may be rough and hasty, you know that I am your friend, and that I shall devote my life to doing you service."

Her eyes had strayed to the window.

"There is nothing to tell," she said to him.

"Yes, there is; there must be, or you wouldn't have spoken as you did," he answered. "Can't you tell me? Would you rather not? Because, if it would pain you, you mustn't—only tell me that you will be my friend, and that I may come here often!"

She turned her eyes back to him. "Oh, it's a miser-

MARION MANNING

able business," she said. "You are not the kind of man that should have cared—for me; I shall only do you harm. I can't do any one any good."

There was a little hopeless note in her voice which touched him deeply. "Marion!" he cried.

"Don't! don't!" she said. "You mustn't call me that! It can't ever be! I will tell you why. It's because it couldn't. I could never care for any one. I have no feeling left—at all. None—oh, you needn't exclaim, it's true. There's nothing left, except, perhaps, father—yes, that's different; but that's all. It's absolutely stony there." She tapped her side with her fingers.

"You think so, but you don't know," he expostulated.

But she smiled faintly, leaning back in her chair, with her hands hanging idly by her. "Oh yes, I know," she said, "and I shall tell you why, and how, I know. I have never told any one else; but I think it is better that you should know. Before, long ago, when I was a girl, and after I was married, until—well—I was emotional and intense—no one felt things more than I did; I used to cry in church simply because the hymns touched something in me, I didn't know what; and I loved the sea and the mountains, and the mists and the long shadows on the grass, and all the rest of it; and I was always happy; and I used to dream the most wonderful, beautiful dreams you can possibly imagine when I was out by myself alone in the country. And—oh, children! You wouldn't believe it, but just to hold them in my arms made me feel as if—well, I can't describe the sensation to you—it was all so long ago; but I know that it was a joy to me to be with them—and that I couldn't bear to see them suffer, or any one suffer. If I heard a sad story it made me cry, and if I heard

MARION MANNING

wonderful music it was the same thing—foolish, wasn't it? And all because I believed that the world was a wonderful, glorious world, and that people were worth loving—all because I was happy—oh, idiotically happy!" She told her story without emotion, only disjointedly, as if obliged to recall carefully each separate point in support of the statements she was making.

George looked at her with infinite sympathy and with sorrow-stricken eyes. She smiled rather pathetically.

"You mustn't be sorry for me," she said. "I had more blessings than most people, only things don't last, that's all. My husband, I discovered, cared for some one else, and had deceived me for two years. I rebelled—horribly, at first. I refused to submit, and suffer what so many others had suffered. But, of course, that was childish! I was disillusioned about things, and then afterwards—" She stopped, bit her lips, and moved her hand nervously. Then, with an effort, and very quickly, she went on speaking. "And then he died, and I was unhappy again—because I thought when he died that he belonged to me once more—and that was almost a pleasure—but I was wrong, because the one he loved stole him from me when he was dead—his soul, I mean. She kissed him last, you know." Her voice had become hard as steel, and her eyes were quite expressionless. "And so there was nothing left—no memory even—for me. It was rather hard at first, but every day it got easier, and now there's nothing." She shrugged her shoulders and laughed. "I've tried myself at everything—nature, music, even children, holding them in my arms, or seeing them cry in the hospitals; but nothing has any effect, I never have any more of those old feelings. But don't think I mind," she went on hastily, a little anxiously, as she

MARION MANNING

noticed that his eyes had left her face and were averted from her. "It's so much better this way. I was tired of suffering, of being unhappy, and I have finished, that's all. Merciful, isn't it? I am so satisfied and contented. I study and amuse myself, and the time passes quickly, and I was glad to have you for my friend, and I want you to be so still. You see, I have treated you as a very close friend, for I have never spoken to any one about this before; but I thought—just as you said to me—that it would be fairer to you to tell it." She got up and went over to his chair. "Will you be my friend still?" she asked, as she laid one hand gently on his arm.

He started, and turned a haggard face to her. "Do you know what you've been saying?" he stammered. Then he brushed her aside, and strode to the window. When he came back to her his eyes were blurred. "Don't—don't ever talk like that again," he said. He took her hand firmly in his and pressed it tightly. "You must put all that behind you, you must look ahead. It will all come back. Your soul isn't dead—it's only asleep—only, you mustn't be too contented. It's better for you to hate what you do, and rebel about things, than to let yourself drift as you are doing. Mrs. Manning, it was terrible to hear you talk, but it's worse to think that you feel like that. Let me help you. I will be your friend—so help me God!—till life's end; and I will make you feel again, so that you can cry. But I will make you happy, too . . . make you love me!"

He spoke the last words so low that she hardly heard them, but she broke from him with a little cry.

"Oh no, I don't want to suffer or cry; you will be a bad friend if you do that. You must leave me alone; I don't want anybody to interfere."

A smile crept over her features once again. "After

MARION MANNING

all," she said, "even if you did try, it wouldn't do any good."

He made a quick resolution. "You can't prevent me, at any rate, from believing in you," he said, "and I am grateful to you for letting me be your friend. We start, at any rate, above board, don't we—straight and square? But if I come here often, may I talk to you about myself? You wouldn't be bored?"

"Bored?" she laughed. "I want to hear about all the things you are interested in. I told you that I wanted to hear you speak."

"I don't know that I can promise you that pleasure." He had reassumed control over himself; his eyes only looked drawn and a little tired. "But will you come with me to the House some day? I shall let you know when some good debate is going on; or, better still, ask Mrs. Caring to come and you can both lunch with me. We'll get Senator Owens, and we'll talk about California. Would you like that?"

She smiled. "I feel when you are talking to me as if I were a school-girl, or rather, one of your boys at the club. I am sure they stand a little in awe of you. Of course I shall lunch with you some day, with joy."

There was a knock at the door and a servant came in, carrying a note. "They're waiting for an answer," the man said.

"Will you excuse me?" Marion asked Hood, and opened the envelope. She read the letter through. "I must write a line," she said. "I shall ring when the answer is ready," she added, to the servant. The footman left the room. She went to her writing-table and sat down before it. Hood went to the window, and for several minutes Marion stared at him, with her pen in her hand. The note was from Aleck

MARION MANNING

Houghton. "I have just arrived," it said; "may I come to see you this afternoon or evening? I am only in Washington for the night, since I must be in New York to-morrow evening." Marion mused, and there was silence in the room. Suddenly the man by the window turned and faced her. There was a smile in his kind eyes as he asked: "Finished?"

"No," she said, "I haven't written anything; I'm deliberating."

"Can I help you?" was the ready question.

"When you are undecided in your own mind as to whether you ought or ought not to do a thing, what do you do?" she asked, with uplifted eyebrows.

"Don't do it," he said, without hesitation.

"Why?" she said, with surprise.

"It's much easier to do a disagreeable thing," he said, "than to run away from a nice one."

She got up from the table and went close to him. "Mr. Hood," she said, with her eyes on the floor, "I am sorry that you told me what you did to-day. I was content. I don't want to be discontented. I am afraid that you will make me so. I was much happier before you came in; now I am upset about things. I don't know exactly what to do. I want to have you for a friend, but"—she got more excited—"I don't want you to interfere with me. You can't judge me from where you stand, and as long as I don't hurt any one—"

"Ah, there you are," he interrupted. "You are bound to do either one thing or the other: help or hurt the people you come across. You may shirk the responsibility of it, but it's true all the same."

She looked at him in astonishment. She had never before heard a man make love and reprove in the same breath, and she was a trifle annoyed.

MARION MANNING

"I told you that you would have to be very careful so as not to be injured by me!" she laughed, and sat down at her desk. He winced slightly but did not answer, and she wrote her note: "I am not dining out. Come to dinner at eight o'clock."

V

"Every man has his fault, and honesty is his."

—SHAKESPEARE.

FROM that day on, George Hood saw Mrs. Manning constantly, and slowly, gradually, he gained an influence over her which bade fair to outstrip all others, and to have a deep effect on her life. Having once broken the ice of reserve, it seemed to give her a genuine pleasure to talk to him, even though the dreaded subject of her own lost sensibilities was very rarely touched upon. She sought his advice, however, and on many occasions she followed it. He could not but be flattered and pleased at the progress he was making in his intimacy with her, and he loved her more deeply as the days lengthened and the time for their separation during the summer months came nearer.

Some time before that, however, Marion discovered, or rather thought that she had discovered, that while George Hood had given her a great love, which, though exacting, was also unselfish, yet that it had not deterred him from his work or made his other interests less vital to him than they had been. She saw that he was a stronger and a finer man than Leverich, who had given everything up for her, and yet her vanity was a little hurt that she should not have sufficient power over him, whether she exercised that power or not, to make politics and his career of secondary value to him compared to his love.

MARION MANNING

On two occasions she was particularly reminded of that importance which he attached to the objects which bore on his work, or on his sports, or which in any way touched his love of country. Once it was when after she and several others had lunched with him at the Capitol, and he had led the party through the building, playing cicerone and political interpreter at the same time. It had seemed to her then as if she had been but one of the crowd to him, and as if the interest which he attached to the subject he was describing was alone dominant with him: as if she was of no real moment in his life.

And then the second time that her attention was called to that separation of his affections from his other interests was one May day at Mount Vernon, when he entirely forgot her presence during a discussion with the Superintendent of the place on the life and character of Washington and of all that concerned him, such as the furniture and the belongings of the great statesman. For an hour and a half George Hood and the Superintendent had wandered about, figuratively arm-in-arm, examining and arguing to their very apparent and unclouded satisfaction.

"Love is with him a thing apart," Marion decided then, and, womanlike, she could not resist questioning him about it.

She did so that very day at Mount Vernon, when, after a picnic lunch, he and she had strolled away from the other members of the party to walk in the adjacent woods.

In that party was Mrs. Caring, who had been peculiarly amusing at lunch that day, aiming all her sallies at either George Hood or Leverich, who was also one of them. Hood had parried them very readily, but Leverich had been unusually silent, and even though she had rallied him on his gloomy looks, his

MARION MANNING

spirits had not risen in any noticeable manner after her remarks. The trouble with him was that he had not succeeded in getting a seat next to Marion, although Hood had; and that he noticed that she seemed to be much amused by the Congressman's conversation. "What a fool I am," he said to himself, "to notice such trifles;" but all the same he watched her, and after they had finished lunch he went to her side.

"Sir James," Mrs. Caring cried, "they want you, as an English diplomat, to lay some flowers on Washington's grave. I've been thinking that wild flowers would make a novel wreath. How do you like them?" She held up a chain of little arbutus flowers which she had been piecing together. Every one laughed again, and Leverich groaned in spirit. "I suppose you think," she went on, with a laugh, "that in heaven alone there is peace."

"Well, even that will be disturbed some day," Leverich said, significantly; then added, in a quick whisper to Marion, "Come for a walk." But here again he was doomed to disappointment.

"I have just promised Mr. Hood," she said.

"Sorry," he mumbled as she rose, and a few minutes later strolled away from them all.

With dancing sunlight playing through the fresh green of the spring foliage, with the music of the birds' songs in his ears, and with her next to him, the woods seemed a very paradise to George Hood, and he was silent from the joys of sight and sound and feeling.

After a long pause she said: "You are a difficult person to know. You are like a book which is written in two volumes; each one may tell a different story. Each side of you does, too."

He looked at her with surprise, then he smiled, for, in the words of the old writers, she was passing fair to look upon.

MARION MANNING

“Two soul sides—one to face the world with, one to show a woman when he loves her?” he questioned.

She was pleased by his answer and threw a swift, sweet glance at him, but she persisted in her inquiry. “I mean,” she said, “that your two sides don’t join, but are quite separate. Isn’t it true that you live entirely in the present, in the moment?”

“What a funny question,” he laughed. “Do you mean that I can’t see any farther than my nose?”

“Oh yes, you can see,” she said; “but when you are interested in a person or in a subject, it seems at the time as if you thought of nothing else.”

“Why, my dear Mrs. Manning,” he exclaimed, “you can’t talk of one thing and think of another!”

“I used to be able to,” she said, in a low voice, more to herself than to him.

He turned to her quickly. “Did you mean that?” he said, gently. “I didn’t understand, but you are mistaken, I think. I am only able to be interested in those other things now, because—I am not unhappy. My life hasn’t lost its color. If it did, I might still do those other things, but I doubt if the interest would be as—keen. Perhaps I am not good at self-analysis; perhaps I don’t understand myself properly, or rather, haven’t made you understand me; but I know this, that before you came into my life it was gray and very cheerless, and that now—I can see how the sun shines, and how the woods glow with color, and—and—the joy and the glory of life.” His voice was exultant, and he turned as if he would have taken her into his arms to realize to himself that joy and glory of which he spoke. But she had started away, and with swift footsteps she sped along the path ahead of him. He hastened after her, and when he came up to her side she laughed.

“I made you run,” she said—“a rare exercise for a Congressman!” She chattered on, leaving him hardly

MARION MANNING

time to interpose a word here and there, and seemed so gay that he saw it to be useless to attempt serious conversation. She told him an amusing experience she had had once on her travels, and the recollection of it caused her to laugh like a child, infectiously. Then, in a sudden change of mood, she sobered down. "Tell me," she asked—"that constituent of yours? Is he still giving you trouble?"

He frowned, his attention immediately reverting to the topic which she had broached. "A horrid bore, the whole thing," he said. "I will tell you the latest developments, if you like."

"Oh, please do!"

So they strolled on more slowly, and he explained the situation to her. And this, in fewer words, is the gist of it all:

The district in southern California which George Hood represented in Congress was one which had been very free from political intrigue up to the present time. It had had its good and its bad elements, it is true; it had had its disinterested workers for the public good, and its selfish schemers for personal prosperity. But those are to be found all the world over, in private homes as well as in political districts, and from an actual political ring it had been singularly free, until the winter which preceded the present spring. Then, however, a band of party men had organized themselves under the leadership of a man called Forge. This Forge was a ship-builder, one who from the passage of the Shipping bill had derived great benefits, and who now was a power in his native town. Having never forgiven Hood for his opposition to that bill, he had yet up to the present time not felt himself of sufficient strength to oppose the popular member of Congress. Latterly, however, he had been gaining ground, and his political ambitions awakening with

MARION MANNING

the growth of his commercial importance, he desired to usurp Hood's place in the House of Representatives. To effect this desire, he had conceived a brilliant idea. Knowing Hood's scrupulousness in matters of public as well as of private honesty, and the rigidity of the principles which he upheld, he and his followers had decided to frame a new platform of which the glitter would appeal to the majority of voting men, and yet be seriously condoned by Hood. This was skilfully done, and, without the absent Congressman's knowledge, it was circulated judiciously among his constituents. Then, the time being ripe for it, Forge had begun to address public meetings, and to point his speeches with the ideas which he had introduced into the new platform: that which he wished accepted as the party platform. At this juncture Hood's friends had suspected the truth and had told him of it. This news had reached him a month hence. He had been utterly surprised by their fears and by the presence of this political ring, whose existence he had not suspected. He had immediately written back several forcible letters, advising such and such plans of campaign, and then had said that later he would arrange to leave Washington for a visit to California, important work in the House alone preventing him from going West at once. The convention, which he had never previously doubted would renominate him that summer, was to meet in July; the election would take place in November; his term expired the following March. He, therefore, had deemed it advisable to waste no time, but to act immediately, and his instructions to his friends were concise and thorough.

A fortnight before the conversation with Marion Manning which I have just related, he received a letter from one of his advisers, telling him that Forge was on his way to Washington for the purpose of having

MARION MANNING

introduced some appropriation which he wanted into the River and Harbor bill. "Here is your opportunity," the adviser had written. "Our friend Forge values his dollars more than his ambitions, and as your support is invaluable to him in this scheme, he very probably would consent to relinquish his political plans for this term if you backed up his appropriation for him." A few days later Mr. Forge called on George Hood, and in the most friendly, open manner invited his aid. George, knowing the man he was dealing with, met him on the same friendly basis. He expressed himself as willing to help him, and only asked for a few days in which to look over his claim and investigate the matter. On investigation he discovered that Forge was asking twice as much as was necessary for the accomplishment of the work; and when he saw him for the second time he told him, still in a most friendly way, that he did not think that he ought to ask for so much. The matter was argued out at length, George being still most diplomatic, and the interview ended when Forge said that he would think it over and would call again. Instead of calling, however, he wrote, and, in very friendly words still, said that it would be impossible to curtail the appropriation required; that either the full amount would have to be asked for or none at all. George read through the lines and saw the threat it veiled. Then it was that he consulted Senator Owens as to which would be the wisest plan for him to pursue. I say consulted, and yet it is hardly the right word to use, because, although he stated the case clearly to the General and asked for his advice, it was nevertheless quite evident that his decision had been made from the start. Though their politics differed, yet on matters of principle the Republican Senator and the Democratic Congressman agreed fully, and General Owens, though

MARION MANNING

deploring the necessity for Hood's course of action, yet thoroughly approved of it.

"On matters of this kind," the Senator said to him, "I find that we've both got pretty much the same ideas. What you've got to do now, I suppose, is to meet him on open ground and crush him thoroughly. There's hard work for you—but you'll do it. I am not afraid. By Jove! I've been many years in the business, and I've yet to see the best man beaten in the end. They never are, unless they lack fighting qualities, and then they're usually weak. You're not, so that even if you leave Congress next term you will be back in it before many years are out."

"Well, I hope you're right, General. But I can't say that the waiting will amuse me. Of course, I shall have to fight. I can't have the district lost to the Democrats," had been Hood's answer.

"Ha! ha!" the Senator laughed. "There I don't follow, and we'd better adjourn the discussion."

That same evening Hood had written a strong letter to Forge, telling him that he would be glad to ask Congress for one-half of the appropriation mentioned, deeming that sum more than sufficient for the purpose wanted, and that he could do no more. His letter had been polite, if forcible. Forge, however, was not discouraged. He returned to the attack over and over again, till a day came when Hood in plain words told him that he was tired of the whole question. Then Forge left him, openly defying his power and resolved to avenge himself in open convention.

"He left yesterday for California," George Hood said, as he concluded his little story to Marion. He was prodding the earth with his cane and did not look at her.

"This new platform," she asked—"if the party accept it, couldn't you support it?"

MARION MANNING

"No," he said, briefly.

"Is it such a bad one?" she still questioned.

"Its principles are different from mine, that's all," he answered, "and I can't agree to any number of its propositions."

"Then the only thing left for you to do," she said, "is to prevent its being accepted. Isn't that it? You couldn't, I suppose, have humored this man and got him his appropriation?"

"I can't cater to him simply to keep my seat," he said; then added, impatiently, "You, of all others, must know that."

They were standing still now, and he poked his cane still deeper into the earth and burrowed a hole with it. She watched him, her eyes travelling from his face to his hands, and back again.

"I used to think politics the finest profession in the world," she finally said. "It strikes me now as being rather"—she hesitated—"rather difficult for a gentleman, and an honest man."

He pulled his cane from the ground. "Don't say such things," he said, as he turned his eyes to her face. "You judge from trifles; from single instances. You mustn't talk like those idlers whose only occupation is criticism, and who consider themselves too good to touch with their white hands the soiled hands—so they call them—of the politicians. Let me explain it to you a little, will you?" He looked at her eagerly. She had seated herself on a fallen tree and was staring at the Potomac River, which ran its course below the bank where they were. "You see, there's good and bad in everything," he said, "in other things as well as in politics, and fine work is often fingered by people who are unfit to touch it, though it isn't less fine for that. That's like politics. It's the best profession in the world, I assure you, and I believe that even

MARION MANNING

the men who use it for a bad purpose get good out of it which couldn't be got from law or business. Especially in national politics, because you are always working for big and patriotic causes that *must* widen people's minds and broaden their sympathies. And then, besides that, politics in the United States are very much purer than you think. Do you know why it is that they have such a bad name among certain people?" She shook her head. "It's because the man who makes the most noise," he went on, "is usually heard farthest, and as with us impure politics are very noisy, luckily for the country, their doings travel farther and all the world talks of them. That's all! But just think of the army of silent, hard-working men who are doing their duty in public life, high or low, as the case may be, and whose voices are not heard above the crowd. And then look at the men in high places! You can't deny that nearly all of them deserve their places, and that their influence is of the best. Well, if the men who are highest and those who are lowest, sometimes, are pure-minded and disinterested, it's only the minority who are not so. It is generally those who are in the middle—middlemen, you might call them, because they are just like those people in the great towns who are the go-betweens between the workers and the employers, and who cheat both. There are many middlemen in politics, it is true; not go-betweens, but middle intelligences, middle moral characters, men who will never be great or of any real use. Forge is one. But they'll never be more than middlemen, and every day their number is decreasing."

Marion interrupted him. "But some of them rise above the middle line," she said. "It isn't only the good who are great."

"No," he answered, "there are exceptions; but in America our greatest men have been good. Do you

MARION MANNING

remember my telling you what Senator Owens said to me the other day? That good men would always be on top if they had the same fighting qualities that the bad have. And that's about it! And that's why honest men and gentlemen should go into politics and oust those middlemen, and learn to fight as hard as they—and harder, too. That's why I won't let Forge win this fight, and, even if he is successful in the beginning, I shall keep on fighting him, because I want to succeed and remain in politics, even if I can never be more than one of that big, quiet crowd." He paused and stared at the filmy haze over the great river beyond which, in the distance, lay Washington. Then he turned to his companion with a deep frown between his eyes. "Yes, it may have to be tooth and nail," he said, "but I'll do it, and in the end I promise you that I'll win."

She did not doubt him for a moment, but answered, unhesitatingly, "Yes, I am sure you will."

"Thank you," he said, simply; then his face softened. "Who would have thought a year ago that I should have spoken to a woman as I have now to you?" He smiled. "What a change you have made in me!"

"Do you like the change?" she asked, with hesitation, not looking at him.

"You have made me see things," he said, "and know things—" He stopped abruptly. "Hadn't we better join those people, it's really getting late?"

She rose. "Yes," she said. "You mustn't leave Washington, though. I should feel very sorry if you left. I should feel lost without you."

A slow flush came over his face, but he was silent.

"It was very good of you to say that," he said, in a low tone, as they joined their friends.

VI

"All reasonable men have long since concluded that the hero of the poem ought not to be a character of perfect virtue, for then he could not without injustice be made unhappy; nor yet altogether wicked, because he could not then be pitied."

—DRYDEN.

PERHAPS it will seem strange to the reader that I should have chosen to tell the story of Marion Manning, a woman whose nature was not of the strongest; one who had let the best that was in her be blighted, and who had stifled her finest impulses; but it must be remembered that we do not love only those who are good and brave, but often the weak and the frail. And it seems to me that in this world there are many whose lives seem selfish and worthless, who yet have started their day in nobler wise than others, and, from having climbed too high, must needs, if they fall, fall the hardest. Those the world brands harshly, and it may be that they deserve it; but they are none the less worthy of love. They are types, too, with their perhaps stronger brethren of humanity, and as such their history deserves writing.

And, after all, it is only the infallible who are intolerable.

Another incident occurred before Marion left Washington in June, which I fear will not greatly redound to her credit, but which must be told if the good and the bad sides of her character are to be truthfully revealed. It may be that she will not be held responsi-

MARION MANNING

ble for it, and that from the start it will have been seen to have been inevitable. At all events, it happened that on one of his visits to Washington that spring Aleck Houghton proposed to her. She was not astonished at what he said. For some time she had suspected that he loved her; but she was genuinely grieved when she saw how her words hurt him. She refused him without hesitation, but she wished that she might palliate the pain she was causing: pain such as she had known the meaning of. Aleck Houghton had come to her that day evidently hoping much, and the decisive though kind words which she used to him struck him as single, sharp blows, not to be parried. "It's been so many years," he said to her, in broken tones; but he received his defeat in a manful spirit, and tried to hide the wound from her that she had made. Before he left her he said, "You must let me get over this first, before seeing you again." Then he had smiled bravely. "One does get over things, you know, if one tries hard enough."

"Please try, Mr. Houghton," she said, with genuine feeling in her voice. "I myself let things—get the better of me. They ruined my life."

"I thought—I could have helped you," he said, with his eyes bent on the carpet, "to make life different."

"You can't," she said, sadly.

But as he went to the door she called to him. "Mr. Houghton—I feel as if—"

He had come back very eagerly. "Tell me," he said.

"It's hard to tell, but I feel if I don't explain"—she hesitated. She was clasping and unclasping a bracelet on her wrist. "You see, I owe you so much—so much more than any one else."

"You owe me?" he cried, astonished.

MARION MANNING

"Yes," she said, "about John. I heard about it all—oh, years ago! About the time when you were in college together; and ever since then I've wanted to thank you, but I couldn't. It never seemed as if I could speak about it."

"Mrs. Manning, you mustn't now," he said, taking hold of her hand. "It was never anything, really; he didn't realize—and I? Why, just think of it! It was only unawares doing a little thing for you, which can't ever be anything else but pleasure to me."

"How kind you are," she said, looking into his face with very sad, grateful eyes; "and you do know that I would do everything I could for you—but this? I want you to know it."

"I would never have you do this for me, unless you cared for me; not otherwise. But you must not think any more about it. Will you promise not to?"

She did not answer, and he kissed her hand with deep emotion.

When, that evening, Marion went to her room, she sank down in a large arm-chair, while a feeling of heavy lassitude came over her. Mechanically she picked up a book from the little table at her side and opened it at random:

"The Moving Finger writes, and, having writ,
Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out one word of it."

"Nor all your tears, that I know," she thought. "Nor all your wit, but it moves on and on. First, Mrs. Walford in my life, now I in Molly's. And it shows how one can drift—and we are bound in the web of driftwood, I stronger than the others, so it seems to me. If one never got tired, though, it would be easy

MARION MANNING

enough; but it's the weariness of it all that weighs. 'Nor all your tears'; I wonder if Molly is as unhappy as I was. I wonder whether things will ever change."

There was a knock at the door, and, as it opened slowly, Liza peeped into the room. "Law me, Miss Marion, what are you doing there?" she cried, as she saw her. Then she closed the door and came in. "Now, why didn't you call your old Liza," she said, with an air of annoyance, as she sank on her knees beside her mistress, and took her feet in her hands. "Here you is sitting here, all by yourself, looking as if you was ready to drop. And no one to put you to bed. What's old Liza for?" She took Marion's slippers off, and stroked her feet. Marion smiled.

"Why, Liza, you know that I never call you in the evening; I always get undressed by myself."

"And a bad habit it is, too, Miss Marion." The old negress rose from her knees, and stood with her arms folded, looking at her mistress. "You oughter know you ain't in no condition to put yourself in bed to-night—never saw anything like those pale cheeks of yours! Why, honey, didn't yer know that old Liza is always dying to help yer?" And at these last words she bustled about the room, unwilling to show any emotion. But Marion had caught hold of her, and had thrown her arms round her neck.

"Dear old Liza," she said, leaning her brown head against the black wool of the faithful creature. "I believe, Liza, that if you and I were alone on a desert island, you would want to put me to bed and look after me just as you do here."

"Well, of course!" Liza exclaimed, tossing her head. "And what else would I do? Wasn't I born for that? And now hurry, Miss Marion. This ain't the time to

MARION MANNING

waste on words! It's getting mighty late!" Marion laughed and began to undress.

A fortnight later she went to Heveril with her father.

And at about the same time George Hood, having paired with a Republican colleague, left Washington for California.

In California he found his friends' fears sufficiently realized to cause him anxiety, but he set to work at once to counteract the opposing element which for months had been working silently. He talked and argued with politicians of every grade and calling; he bearded the enemy in his own den; and he made two strong speeches at public meetings. While his popularity still seemed as great as ever, yet he could not help seeing that an influence contrary to his was making itself felt, and that his humblest constituents were worrying over what they considered merely the upholding of their rights, which a new platform would enforce. He did good work, though, and strengthened his own cause. It may be said, however, that Forge's cleverness had here manifested itself most clearly, for an opposition candidate to Hood would have had little chance of success, whereas now Forge and his friends campaigned openly, apparently for the present member of Congress, from whom, so they admitted, they only differed in the words which were to be used in the party platform.

When the convention met, Forge and George Hood were prominent members of it. But here, on the second day of its sitting, George knew that he had failed, for Forge's platform was adopted by a large majority.

That evening Hood went to see Father Augustin. "It's a rotten business," he said to the monk, letting his discouragement gain the upper hand of him, "to find one's self in a hole like this. To have one's career

MARION MANNING

cut short, perhaps ruined entirely, for a transparent fraud of this kind. What knaves and fools *can* do!"

He paced the monastery parlor impatiently. Father Augustin, seated stiffly on an upright chair, watched him as he walked to and fro, but said nothing. At last, after a long silence, the Franciscan smiled under his straight, white eyebrows, and Hood, catching the smile, glanced at him in interrogation.

"The foolish man exults in successes," he said, gently. "The wise man succeeds through failures."

"Perhaps," the younger admitted, "but not always, at any rate. Here, at least, I see no further than the present."

"Just now," the monk still smiled, "but an hour hence?"

"They'll be coming to me at the hotel to ask for my acceptance of the nomination." Hood laughed. He had recovered himself, and sat down beside the Franciscan. The long room, its walls hung with religious engravings and paintings of little excellence, with straight-back chairs placed at regular intervals against the brown-painted walls, with a long table running down the centre of the room, was but dimly lit by a small, green-shaded lamp which stood at the far end of the table.

The men talked long and earnestly together. At last George rose to leave. "You never change," he said to the priest, "and you understand men."

"I have tried to understand you, my son," Father Augustin answered; "but then your lights are high placed, and are not hard to discern. And they point to a future that will be worth attainment. God be with you." They parted, and Hood returned to the hotel.

At his hotel he found the messengers he had expected. They told him that they expected to renomi-

MARION MANNING

nate him the following day. "You will run again, will you not?" they asked.

"The convention must choose," he said, "between the platform and me. I can't support the one accepted to-day."

They professed great surprise at his words. "But it's too late to change that," they said. "We can't lose you, and, as the platform must stand, you must agree to support it."

But he was true to his colors. "It is useless," he said, "the convention will have to know it to-morrow."

And the convention was told of it in due course, but Forge's adherents were numerous enough to show their apparent discontent by hisses. Then several speeches were made, all in Hood's favor, and as he rose to his feet he was greatly cheered. When, however, he reiterated his intention of quarrelling with the platform, the crowd grew silent, and as he sat down there was no sound in the great hall.

That afternoon, Forge's name being deftly presented to the convention, he was nominated in the place of the man who was their present representative, and a political ring for the first time was victorious in his district.

When, a few hours later, on the train which was bearing him swiftly back to the East, George Hood sat alone in his sleeping compartment with the lights in it turned down, and the starlight alone shining in through the large pane of smooth glass, he pondered many things over in his mind. The sky was black that night as the train climbed the mountains, but the stars were brilliant, and their number seemed bewildering. "I wonder," he thought, "whether I might have done differently. Not now, but further back, when work might have been of value. It seems hard, to have failed as I have in a good cause. What atoms we are, though; and yet we fight and struggle, though night

MARION MANNING

comes so regularly, and we can see those other worlds looking down on us. I wonder—with contempt or not?" His thoughts flew to Marion, in her Southern home. "I wonder what she thought when she read my telegram. Will she be truly sorry? How much will she mind? I mustn't fail there, as I have done here." He sighed, then pulled down the blind and turned the light on.

Marion received his wire that same evening, as she returned to the Manor House after a long drive with her father. She opened it by the side of a lamp in the hall. "Father," she cried out, "Mr. Hood has been defeated. He has lost his nomination!" And, while the old gentleman was indulging in loud-voiced regrets, she thought: "Next winter will be his last in Washington. I shall miss him when he goes. However, that is a long time off."

The summer months moved in their steady course, but George Hood and Marion Manning did not meet till the days grew short again, and winter brought them together in Washington. Marion spent the summer at Heveril. And had it not been for Mrs. Caring and Senator Owens, who came to pay her a short visit, she would have seen no one all the summer but a few neighboring families, who had never been very intimate with her. She did not ask Molly to come to Heveril; she did not think that she would come, even if she did ask her. She felt certain that the girl knew what had happened, or, if she did not know, at least strongly suspected it. Marion had never ceased, since seeing Houghton, to blame herself for it all, and she freely accused herself of disloyalty and of a betrayed friendship, for she stinted not the words with which she condemned her action. Of Aleck Houghton she heard through Mrs. Caring, who said that he had gone abroad. "Some delightful trip he's taking,"

MARION MANNING

she had explained, "on a yacht with some friends; they are going to look for the North Pole, or something equally thrilling."

When her two visitors left she was alone again with her father, and but for him her life would have been a solitary one; as it was, she spent many long hours alone. The days were hot, and, as a rule, it was not until the late afternoon that she ventured much away from the house and its piazzas. But, towards five o'clock, she would often put on her habit and go for a long ride with her father, or else drive with him in the light buggy, drawn by a fast trotter. Or again, in the twilight, she would wander alone down to the river-bank and there rest and think, while the cool breezes from the water refreshed the sun-parched land.

She thought of many things then—of the past, of her happy girlhood, of the joy of her early married life, and of its later sorrows; of the present, which but a six months hence had seemed full of amusement and interest, and which now gave her but meagre satisfaction. And often she thought of George Hood, and of the love that he had given her. A love which had roused her from her past apathy, but which had hurt and saddened her. For, in many ways, she was a sadder woman than she had been when he first came into her life—came into it forcibly, stirring it to its very depths. Yet not to its lowest depths, for there he could not reach her. Had he come sooner, when she had all to give, her story would have been a different one; but another was there in those days which now the past claimed, and he had burned his mark on her life. Strangely, weirdly, John Manning was still a personality to her, and at times she seemed to see him standing before her with an imperious strength which warned others away. "I shall stand between you and any future happiness," she could almost hear his voice say.

MARION MANNING

"You have been mine, you are mine still, even in death."

These delusions would come to her only in those twilight hours by the river, but when they came they were startling and realistic. At those moments she would close her eyes and throw out her arms to escape from the touch of a dead man's hands, and she would run from the river-bank, where his spirit had haunted her. Once Colonel Heveril found her white and trembling, leaning against one of the pillars of the portico, and, on his questioning her, she only answered: "I don't know; the darkness by the river frightened me." And she would say no more. And yet, although the river-bank and the moving water brought back the memory of the man she had loved and then despised, although his presence even sometimes seemed to approach her when she was alone, yet the spot thrallled her, and drew her to it with irresistible force. Strangely enough, she had had none of these feelings before Hood's love had worked on her, and she now often wondered why the love of one man should have made the one who had died more alive to her than he had been since his death. But the Californian knew nothing of all this, and the purpose in his heart to make her his remained unchanged.

VII

"Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing."

—SHAKESPEARE.

MARION corresponded with Hood during the summer months of absence, and when the time drew near for the return of each to Washington, she found herself looking forward to her meeting with him with a pleasure which almost surprised herself. When he saw her again he rejoiced at the pleased look which her eyes gave to him, and at the words with which she said that she had missed him.

After that, they saw each other almost daily, and his influence over her grew apace. Knowing that four months alone held the entire sum of his hopes of success, he exerted himself to the utmost to make his power over her stronger than it had been: to make himself indispensable to her life and to her happiness. He threw his interest into the smallest details of her existence, into the routine of her days, into her pastimes and duties. He advocated change whenever change could be effected; he made her do charitable work; persuaded her to go to church again, even if from a sense of duty only, and not from inclination. He also brought his friends to her house and took her to his boys' club; he advocated new courses of reading for her, and tried to interest her most largely in American works of fiction or history. "She must look at everything differently," he thought, "and only by so doing will she be able to regain what she has lost. She must

MARION MANNING

feel that I am part of every change in her life, because when the time comes for the greatest change to take place, I must be the essential part of that change." Thus he reasoned, and in such wise he succeeded in altering her old habits, and in making her look at things from a different point of view. Perhaps where his power showed itself most clearly was in connection with Sir James Leverich. All unconscious of his guiding hand, Marion gave the Englishman such decided discouragement that for the first time Leverich realized seriously that he was ruining his life by a hopeless passion. The result was that he applied to the Foreign Office for another post, and, as he had sufficient influence at home to back up his request, it was soon known in Washington that during the following summer he would leave America for the East. The news of his coming departure did not displease Marion, for she was now too much absorbed by her new friend to heed his presence very greatly. She was also glad that his love for her would no longer prove itself a stumbling-block in his career.

Thus much had Hood done for her character. But more than that he did. He brought added interest into her life; he filled it with a certain kind of excitement which was a novelty; and he helped her with the decisions which even in her existence, void as it was of any heavy responsibility, had to be met and taken.

From a selfish stand-point alone she found that he was of great use to her, and she realized fully that were he to leave Washington his place would be hard, if not impossible, to fill. She wished, therefore, that he would stay on in Washington after the 4th of March even, when his term in Congress would have expired, and also stay on through the following winter—for her sake. She exerted all her wiles to make him stay. She tried to make herself indispensable to his happi-

MARION MANNING

ness, and even existence. And he did not suspect her purpose. She saw that he loved her with a love that increased daily, that he was giving the best of himself to her, that she was gaining a stronger hold on him every day. And she was glad of it—as he was glad of it—though for an opposite reason. For he wished, above everything, to win her love and take her back with him to his Western home; but she was only anxious to keep him at her side for her interest and her pleasure. And, while he rejoiced daily that she was growing more human and sentient, she welcomed each fresh proof of his devotion as a strengthened link in the chain which she meant should keep him near her always—he, hoping and dreaming of the day when she would yield him love; she, jealous of her freedom, and only fearful of the day when he would ask her to relinquish it and so remove himself outside of her life. For she well knew that love was not coming into her heart, and that it would never come. Her love had been given once and for all.

But again, George Hood knew nothing of all this, and each with his different purpose looked confidently ahead—looked at the future with very smiling eyes.

But revelation must come sooner or later, and it came to them with the full force of a blow that is unexpected.

Once again in the library of the house on Massachusetts Avenue, once again with the light of a big fire shining on them, and Marion and George were alone, as they had been a year before, when he had first told her of his love. Some visitors had been and gone; the kettle still stood upon the tea-table, but the flame in the lamp was out. Marion was slowly cutting the leaves of a book, George was watching the fire. For a few moments silence reigned. Then the thought of what the scene suggested, and was not, flashed across him.

MARION MANNING

He had something to say to her, but the words were very slow in coming. He looked at her and his throat felt dry, while he fumbled for the words that would not come. She was tantalizingly silent. If she would only speak, it would be much easier for him. But she was so quiet, so serene, so inscrutable, and yet withal so beautiful. The idea that she was too serene did not trouble his mind, for it was busy with weightier matters, as he thought.

At last she looked up and met his eyes. She smiled. "What are you thinking of?" she said.

"You," he answered, with a strange note in his voice.

"Me?" she said, still not suspecting him. "Why? What about? Do you want me to do something for you?"

He rose from his chair and stood in front of her. "Yes," he said, speaking slowly at first, as if with an effort. "I want you to do something—for me—a great deal. My time in Washington is almost up, you know, so there's no use of waiting any longer. Do you remember what I said to you a year ago—about not expecting anything from you then, about waiting? Well, I have waited a year, because I wanted you to know me well, and now you must know me, all my faults as well as any good things that may be in me. If you don't love me now, you never will. But I—I loved you, God knows how much, last year; but now? Every day, whether I see you or not, I love you more. Once I thought that love could never be more than one part of me. I know now that it is the whole of me. I know that I love you, as I have never loved or dreamed of loving any creature on God's earth—and that if you will marry me, if you will give me your life, place it between my hands"—he broke off—"I will guard it well, Marion," he said, with emotion in his voice. "I

MARION MANNING

would give my life to do you homage, you know that—and to place the best gifts of the world at your feet! I have got to go away now, but I can't go without knowing—and I don't feel as if I could go—without you. Will you go with me, Marion? Answer me quickly, it's been such a long wait."

Instinctively she got up. He seized her hands and peered down into her eyes. She said nothing, only looked at him steadfastly. "Why don't you answer?" he said. "Marion, my darling, don't keep me waiting any longer. You do care, don't you—you do love me?" He put one arm round her waist and drew her to him, but she pulled herself away.

"It's a mistake," she said; "George, it's all a mistake; I told you last year that you mustn't wait, that you mustn't hope; that there was no love in me to give away, that there never would be."

He turned white, and steadied himself by leaning one hand on the back of a chair. "But this winter?" he asked, with a queer, altered voice. "You sent Leverich away, you let me come often, you talked to me, I thought—I thought—"

He turned away from her, for her words had unmanned him.

"I let you come," she said, "because you were kind to me, and I valued your friendship. I do value it above everything. I don't see how I could get on without it. I hoped it would always last. Sir James was different. You are a friend unlike any other, more to me than any other. I would trust you with everything. I feel that while I live I want to have you near me—and that when I die I should die better if you were there. I can't spare you—don't you see? But—but—I don't love you. I couldn't marry you. If I married you I should be unhappy. I should want my freedom back. This is the only way—the only

MARION MANNING

way." She looked pleadingly at him, and went forward to put her hand on his arm.

"Is that what you want?" he said, harshly, as he turned to her and fixed her eyes with his. "But do you realize what it is you ask? Do you realize that you ask everything and give nothing—nothing? That you want me to sacrifice everything to you and get nothing in return. Just help you and interest you, and give you friendship. But how about me? What would happen to me? How could I live on that?" He sank down on a chair and hid his face between his hands.

Marion stared at him, not realizing at first—and then tears came to her eyes. She sat down near him and watched him through the tears that fell unhindered on her lap.

At last she spoke. "Yes," she said, "I have been selfish, but I did not know how selfish; I could not bear to have you go away from Washington; California is so far off. I wanted to keep you near me. But . . . I never thought of you—of your part! I thought I could make you stay on in Washington. I see it all now plainly. I have done you harm; I have deceived you." She paused, but he did not lift his head. "Mr. Hood," she said, helplessly, "what is there to do? What can I do? You must help me."

He moved his hands, and showed her a haggard face. He tried to smile. "As you said, it has been a mistake. But there's nothing to do now."

"How do you mean—nothing?" she cried.

"You see, I can't help you any more," he said. "I am sorry, but—"

"You are sorry?" she exclaimed; "what do you mean?" she put her hand on his arm. "Are you going away now? Aren't you going to stay on in Washington? Just realize, for a moment; I sent Leverich

MARION MANNING

away because of you; I have seen hardly any one because of you; I have centred my whole power of friendship on you; you have taken my responsibilities off me. What am I going to do if you go away?"

He was utterly surprised at her words. "Why, Mrs. Manning," he said, "you don't expect me to stay here and go on as I have done? Would you have me remain here, to do that?"

"If you go," she cried, "you will have done me harm instead of good. You will have raised me up simply to knock me down again. Why did you do it? I asked you not to disturb me. I told you that I had nothing, that I never would have anything, but friendship to give to you. You knew it all beforehand and yet you stayed, and only to make me miserable, now." She was half sobbing. He was distressed.

"Marion," he said, taking her hand, "what can we do? I am sorry, sorry from my soul, if it is true, what you say, that I have hurt you; I would die for you so easily! Why should I hurt you? But if I have?" He got up and paced up and down the room. "You ask a great deal of me," he said, at last, with knit brows, "because my place is in California. I should work there till I can win my way back to Congress; otherwise, what I have done here would be wasted, useless! And what would I do if I stayed here? Just realize. And you! I don't know that I should have sufficient strength to stay near you without claiming more than the friendship you offer me. You can't try a man too hard! I don't know whether I could do it. I might, to give you what you want, but I am not sure. And then, I don't know whether I could still help you bear responsibilities—if I had shirked my own. You might come to despise me—in the end."

He was talking to himself more than to her, when he

MARION MANNING

stopped and stood still at the other end of the room with his back to her; but Marion heard him distinctly, and the meaning of his words touched her deeply. She had stopped crying, but there was a terrible look of pain in her eyes as she watched him, and not him alone, but love and duty struggle for the mastery in him.

A few moments later he turned round and came to her side. "Will you let me kiss you, Marion—once?" he asked, in a low, ringing voice, and, as she said nothing, he leaned down and pushed the hair away from her forehead and kissed her there. He kissed her so gently that she hardly felt his touch, but as she met his eyes again she saw that they were shining. "Don't worry," he said, very low, "I will stay." Then he took a long breath, straightened himself up, and smiled. "Let me sit down beside you," he said. He put one of his hands again on hers. "I loved them from the first time I saw them, those hands," he said, very gently again. "Marion, dear, turn round and look at me."

But she drew her hands away and burst out crying. "No," she said, between her sobs, "don't say anything more; go away, please."

"Marion"—there was deep pleading in the man's voice—"don't ask me to go."

But she had grown quieter and rose now. "Wait just a little still," she said, and went to the other end of the room, where he could not see her. The logs in the fireplace crackled and hissed loudly, otherwise everything was still. Hood stared at the carpet. Then she came back and stood before him. The tears were all wiped away, but her eyes looked drawn. "You must go now," she said, "and if I don't tell you all that I feel just now, it's because I can't." She moistened her lips. "By going," she added, "I mean that you mustn't come back here. You must leave

MARION MANNING

Washington, and only return when you are a Congressman again. You couldn't do the other thing, and I—I thank God I see now—I couldn't have let you do it either."

He could not trust himself to speak, only pressed her hand tightly.

"You must not remember all the things I said to-day," she went on, in her sad voice; "I didn't mean them. They weren't true. I can never tell you what you have done for me, but I want you to feel . . . that though I have made you unhappy, that you—have not wasted your love!—that it has saved a poor woman from worse than dying."

"My God, Marion, don't talk like that!" he cried. "I can't stand it!"

"You told me once," she went on, looking dreamily beyond him, "that failures help, somehow, unknown to us. And I think that now this failure is not failure for you, but something great, almost divine. I feel it, as I stand by you, and I think that I shall see things now, from having known you, that I never saw before."

He was not ashamed of the tears in his eyes, and pressed her hands still harder, till the rings almost cut into her flesh. But she did not heed the pain.

"God bless you, dear friend," and this time she looked bravely into his face; "I thank you for your silence." Then her voice changed. "I hear father calling," she said, hurriedly. "Tell me only that you will do as I have said." She snatched her hands from his as the door opened and Colonel Heveril came in.

"Why, father," she cried, with a strained voice, as she ran to meet him and tried to laugh, "you've come too late for tea! It's all over. But come and sit down." She dragged him to a chair, hardly giving him time to shake hands with Hood, and then knelt beside him.

MARION MANNING

"I have missed you so much all day," she said, burying her face against his shoulders. "I wondered what had happened to you. Mr. Hood came to say good-bye, and we talked, and now—why, it's almost dinner-time." She jumped to her feet.

"Yes, I must be going," George Hood said, in a strange, unnatural voice, while he looked at her as if he would imprint her features deeply on his brain and heart, and store the impression of them in his soul—looked at her as a drowning man looks at the sky, with despair in his eyes.

"Good-bye." Regardless of her father's presence, he kissed the hand she held out to him. "If ever—if ever—" he muttered. Then he left the room. He had forgotten to say good-bye to Colonel Heveril.

When the door had closed behind him, Marion sank down again by her father's side. "He's gone!" she said. "You are all I have now!"

VIII

"I count life just the stuff to try the soul's strength on."

—BROWNING.

AFTER all accidents of fate, tumults, or upheavals, still the inevitable law of common living pursues its course; and whether we have laughed, or whether we have cried, quarrelled or made up, we must eat still, or make some semblance of it. That same evening, while George Hood made a feint of dining in his own rooms, and waited patiently for the different courses to be served to him, Marion and her father at eight o'clock sat down in the dining-room, and for an hour or less talked platitudes before the servants.

When, at nine, they were once more alone in the library, Marion lit a cigarette, and the Colonel a cigar, and for a time they spoke disjointedly and at intervals, and on different subjects. At last, throwing her cigarette in the fire and selecting a magazine from the table, she sat down in a low chair by a lamp. She opened the magazine and bent her eyes to it, but did not read. Furtively, from a little distance, in a rocking-chair which moved forward and backward slowly as the wreaths of smoke curled round his white hair, Colonel Heveril watched her. The light from the lamp shone directly on her face, and showed it to be almost as pallid as the white lace and soft silks which so closely touched it—showed, also, deep blue lines under eyes which were no longer brilliant, but dull and heavy.

MARION MANNING

When after a while she said, without lifting her eyes, "I suppose you are sorry about it," he knew at once what she was thinking of, and answered, slowly, "Yes, I should have liked it, but you must know best."

"Come a little nearer, father," she said; "it is easier to talk when one sits closer."

He rose and pulled his chair forward. "You have not spoken to me much about yourself lately," he said to her, "and I didn't like to ask, though you must have known that I thought just the same."

She nodded, but did not answer him.

"From a selfish stand-point," he went on, "of course, I would rather things stayed just as they are. I have you to myself now. I don't share you with anybody. But for yourself, and for the future, I had hoped for this other thing. And, now—you have refused him?"

She got up and moved her chair away from the lamp. "I don't like the light in my eyes," she said to him. "Yes," she added, "I have sent him away, for good, though this isn't the first time he has asked me. A year ago it was, when he first spoke of it." She paused. "It's difficult to explain to you," she went on, "the feeling I have about it—about him—because I admire him more than any one I have ever known, and I like him much, and I have felt that he was almost indispensable to me in my life; and yet, I don't care for him, in the way he wants—in the only way that would make marriage possible."

"He would bring so much into your life," her father protested.

"Yes," she admitted, "in many ways he would; but in others, I should lose. The compensation would not be great enough. Besides—John—is in the way." Colonel Heveril stared at her with dismay and incredulity. "Yes, I gave him all I had to give, and he

MARION MANNING

took it and left me nothing to give to any one else." She spoke very slowly, almost sadly. "As you must have seen, I have been a different person since he died. Do you know why? Because there has been something lacking in me since—something he took away with him." She paused again. "But many of the things I thought I had also lost then have come back to me, through George. My ideas about people and life, which had got distorted, are straight again now—through him. I can't tell you what he has done for me."

"Ah, my dear," her father cried, leaning forward in his chair, which had stopped rocking, "and he might do so much more still! He has made a deep impression on me. I don't think that there are many men like him, Marion. He is like a Virginia gentleman of the old school—in ideas, though perhaps not quite in manners; but then, manners are no longer the same as they were—like my father, your grandfather—the type of man who built up the country, who was not ashamed to think noble thoughts, and to speak them."

Marion smiled faintly. "But if he had lived during the Civil War he would have been a Federal," she said, "and he would have been one of the strongest haters of slavery."

"Ah, well!" the old gentleman sighed, "there can be good men on both sides."

Marion jumped up from her chair and ran to him to throw her arms round his neck. "Father—dear old father!" she cried, "do you actually say that? Is it Washington that has worked the change in you?" She was kissing him and laughing between each breath. And he submitted to her caresses with a very good grace, because he was glad to see her smile and be amused again.

"Well, we must all change with the passing years, old as well as young, mustn't we?"

MARION MANNING

But she would give him no peace, for her mood had changed completely, and she knelt by him and teased him, while he laughed at her sallies, and for the time they were like children indulging in a joyous game.

"Wouldn't people be shocked if they heard us?" she cried. "Two dignified persons like us! Do you remember the time at Heveril years ago, when after some queer visitors had gone you made some serio-comic remark about them and I threw myself flat on the floor in peals of laughter, and you lay back on the sofa and laughed till the tears rolled down your cheeks? And then the door opened, and the Harrisons were announced." Colonel Heveril laughed again at the recollection which her words evoked, and Marion sat on the floor beside him, crossing her feet before her in Turkish fashion. "Oh, the good old times!" she said, leaning her head against his knee. "What fun we used to have! But, father! you missed one bit of fun by never meeting Miss Electa Manning. If you could have seen her, with her thin hair so tightly knotted at the back of her head, and her hooked nose, and her thin figure, and her clothes! I think they must have come over in the *Mayflower*! Oh, and then her scissors, and her 'The Lord knows'!" Marion laughed again, and then, putting one hand behind her, she pinched her father's knee. "Now's your turn! Tell me some funny story."

"Before the war," he began, "when I was a young man in Richmond. . . ." And they kept it up for more than half an hour.

The habit of staring into the fire, however, destroys hilarity, and after a while Marion became quiet. She rose from her lowly position and sighed. "We have been like two children, haven't we? And it was rather heartless of me, considering what I did—to-day."

Colonel Heveril, however, was sensible. "It couldn't

MARION MANNING

hurt him more, and he will never know, and it did us both good. Come and sit by me again, little girl, and let's talk quietly."

She resumed her place at his feet, and, as was his wont, he stroked her hair gently.

"What will you do, now that he has gone?" he asked.

"I don't know. I feel quite adrift—quite helpless. He filled such a large place. But, after all, I couldn't have kept him in the way I wanted, and it's better to have things settled at once. I must begin again! I have you, and that makes all the difference."

His eyes grew a little dim. "It makes all the difference to me," he said.

"We shall talk over plans to-morrow, father," she continued, "and I shall try to map out my life so that it will not be a useless one. There is so much to do for other people—so much unhappiness about that one might help. I've been thinking . . . whether we couldn't turn the red farm-house at Heveril, which is empty now, into a summer home for poor working-girls from Washington and Richmond, or else for little children from the tenements." She stared at the burning logs still with a preoccupied look. "Then, there's Molly, but I don't know if— Oh, and besides, I thought I ought to make Cousin Electa come here for a visit. You wouldn't mind, would you? It would give her so much pleasure! I feel as if I had neglected her all these years, and she's such a good, kind soul." Colonel Heveril still stroked her brown hair, but said nothing. "Would you mind?" she asked again.

He started. "Mind?" he exclaimed. "Why, of course not. And I'll help you, dear, with anything you want to do. And you can have all the land you want at Heveril, and the red house, also. But I still

MARION MANNING

feel that you are letting something slip by you ; I fear so much that later you may come to realize that it was what you wanted, though you didn't know it at the time. And then it might be too late." He paused. "If anything were to happen to me, I should like to feel that you were not alone. I should have had perfect confidence in Hood! Have you tried to care for him, Marion? The love of a man like that oughtn't to be thrown away lightly. Are you sure that you don't care a little for him already?"

"One can't try to care," she said, "and I am sure I don't care for him now. Oh, you are quite right; his love is not to be thrown away lightly, and if I could ever care for him I should be far happier than I am now. But one can't force one's self; and I feel that there is no love left in me to come; that all that part of me has been parched, dried up. If there was a way"—she spoke more rapidly—"of putting something into that empty place, you know that I wouldn't rebel now, though I might have a year ago. But now, I would give much," the words came slowly again, and with difficulty—"I would give a great deal to be able to love again." She put her hands over her face, as if ashamed of her emotion.

"My child," Colonel Heveril answered, "don't fear; it will come; I know it."

"But how—what will make it come? I don't see," she whispered from behind her clasped hands.

He looked at the fire, and then spoke irrelevantly, so it seemed to her, at first. "I think it's the fire," he said. "It is so like suffering! It breaks, but it builds again. With you, its first touch almost killed—" He hesitated. "But I think that when its second comes, it will waken what seemed dead and give love to you again."

She jumped to her feet, and there was a look of horror

MARION MANNING

on her face. "Father, how can you talk like that?" she cried.

"It's the fire that has blinded you, dear," he continued, not heeding her; "but I feel that the fire will again open your eyes, and give sight to them."

Her cold voice recalled him to the present. "I never thought that you would be so cruel," she said.

"Marion," he cried, "I did not mean to hurt you, dear, because I feel that even if suffering did come to you again, you would meet it fairly; and that, through conquering it, you would find happiness."

"It's poor consolation," she said, still with a hard voice. "And I pray that it may never come."

They separated, and Colonel Heveril went to his room with a disturbed expression on his face. "I'm afraid I did harm, instead of good," he said to himself.

Meanwhile George Hood spent a solitary evening in his own rooms. He had left Marion's house in a frame of mind which had stunned his reasoning powers, and for two hours he had paced the streets of Washington with no purpose in sight but that of moving on—somewhere—where, he did not care, only away from the place where he was. He must have walked many miles before he returned to the apartment-house which was his only home in the city, and yet he felt no fatigue.

That evening was one of the longest he had ever passed, and the hardest. For it saw him own defeat; it saw him give up his longed-for happiness, and his hope of it. He paced up and down his room, and by turns he was grieved or angry. "What a hollow thing life is," he thought to himself, "and what rubbish I have talked about right living, and courage, and high purposes, and all the rest of it! Just because I didn't know really, and expected that with my principles and ideas, I would make my life different from other people's. And now I have failed in

MARION MANNING

everything. Career—and this—and I have lost her.” There was the bitterest sting—that he had lost her; that he must live without her and away from her, for he well knew that he must not see her again; that he must leave Washington without seeing her, and later live in California without seeing her; that not only must to-morrow, and the next day, pass without seeing her, but this week and the next, and this month and this year, and beyond! And yet he had grown absolutely accustomed to seeing her daily, to hearing her talk, laugh, sigh, to being near her, consulting her, being consulted by her, thinking of her all day long and all night long—and all the time! Now, not only must he not see her nor hear her, but neither be near her nor think of her any more. That was it—that was the point of it! He must not think of her, because if he thought of her he could not live away from her. “And if I don’t think of her,” he cried aloud, “I shall not be able to live at all.” It was a miserable struggle, the endeavor to get accustomed to it, and it lasted through the night, and much longer. Then, after a time, he realized that it was not a question of getting accustomed to it, but that it was a question of living with it—this new pain that had such a strong hold of him. He remembered that men had lived, smiling, with cancers eating into their very flesh, and he saw that he must do the same thing. He did not blame her; her last words had changed that feeling in him; but his heart yearned over her in pity, in longing to help her and to make her happy. “And now, because I love her better than anything on earth, I can’t do anything for her; I must let her suffer, face any troubles that may come to her without lifting a finger. Just because I love her I am kept back.” The thought drove him almost crazy, and he raged at himself for having suggested leaving Washington, for it would make no difference,

MARION MANNING

really, if he stayed ; it would hurt no one ; and, after all, what was the good of this interminable plodding and running along the straight path when it amounted to nothing—"when it does me no good." He would, besides, have given her great pleasure if he had stayed, without telling her first that his duty called him in another direction. "Noble thing to have done, too—to talk to her about duty and high ideals, and what a lot I'd be giving up if I stayed! And after that—to promise to stay. I don't wonder she wouldn't have it then." He sat down beside a large table in the middle of the room, on which a lamp stood, and took up a book. But, instead of reading it, he put his elbows on the table and hid his face in his hands.

When the morning came—when the light began to filter through the drawn blinds, George Hood went to the window and opened it. The cool air rushed into the room. In the east he could see pink shades in the gray sky. Washington lay sleeping.

"Here comes the sun. Another endless day." He sighed, then laughed loudly. "Well, it's got to finish, some time or other."

IX

"'Tis always morning somewhere in the world."

—HORNE.

IT was in New Hampshire, on a November day. Aleck Houghton sat at his writing-table before one of the windows of his sitting-room. He was not writing, but was leaning both his arms on the table while he stared out of the window. The view from it was monotonous, however, and could not alone have succeeded in arresting his thoughts. In reality they were far from it, for he was reviewing his own life for the past eighteen months. Eight months of it he had spent abroad with friends, travelling. The remaining ten had seen him hard at work at law in New York, trying to build up a practice for himself and to inspire some confidence in the minds of those people whom he wished to make clients. He thought now that he could see in the future a certain glimmering of success, and he had fully made up his mind to persevere in his work. He had not seen Marion since the day that she had refused him. For months, for over a year, in fact, he had never ceased thinking of her; then one fine morning he realized that he had been through the worst of it. For he had struggled, without ceasing, to put her out of his mind, and, as he had told her bravely that day, "One does get over things, you know, if one tries hard enough," so his struggle had borne fruit at last. The summer which was over had been a pleasant one for him; although he had spent the greater part of it in

MARION MANNING

New York, still his Sundays and holidays had been passed at Garton—a rich compensation for the hot, hard-working week-days. There he had seen Molly Hart, and had drifted back into his old ways of being with her continually.

He had always liked Molly. He had always looked upon her as a friend among ten thousand. He had always felt that she was one of those women whose presence banished ignoble and ugly thoughts, and whose influence was of that character that gives blessings to those who come in contact with it. When he had been in trouble, he knew that Molly would best sympathize with him and help him bear it. When he had wanted to enjoy himself or to be amused, Molly had always been the most diverting companion of all. From the day when he was but a mere boy he had confided everything to her; until Marion Manning had come into his life.

From their first meeting Marion had attracted him strongly, and after that, unawares to himself, he had drifted into loving her. He had only realized it fully when he heard of John's death. Then, with a sudden exultation, he had thought, "She is free!" A year later he met her in Europe, and, though he at once noticed the change in her, yet he found that her fascination for him had increased threefold. She had been nice to him; how nice, he had not quite realized until they were separated again; then, in his mind, he had lived over those days which he had passed near her in Rome, and he had remembered what good, glad days those were! He continued to live those days over until he saw her. It was in Washington, and many months afterwards, that they met again, and then, that same winter, he had heard that Sir James Leverich wanted to marry her, and also that a Congressman from California was in love with her. This news made

MARION MANNING

him more anxious than ever to try his chance, especially as he thought that she liked him, and liked him better than the others. And then, in one short hour, his hopes of years had been shattered.

A year later, he had met Molly at Garton for the first time in fourteen months, and he had found her unchanged. He had been very much touched by her sweetness to him, and at the time he had thought, "She suspects what happened; she is sorry for me!" She had been so sweetly sorry for him, if that was the explanation of it, that he was only happy when she was there, and every Sunday he walked or drove with her. So the summer had gone by, and a week ago only he had come to his little farm to look after some matters there. But before coming he had seen Molly at a dinner-party in New York, and that evening, as a flash of light, it had come across him that she loved him. He could not quite tell how he had found it out, except that he had once turned suddenly and met her eyes, which were fixed on him, and that something in her expression had disclosed her secret. After that, he noticed it every time she spoke to him, although she was unconscious of it, and he, had it not been for that sudden light, would have been so too. He had thought of nothing else since—she, Molly, cared for him! It was some time before he actually acknowledged the fact to himself, because at first the idea had been very painful to him. That he should have cared for another, and she always have cared for him! But afterwards he saw it very plainly, and as he looked back on his intercourse with her, and the things she had said to him and the way she had often looked, he wondered why he had not known it before. Then slowly the idea worked on him and became very sweet to him. Might not she, Molly, whom he had always been fond of, who was dearer to him than any other, might not

MARION MANNING

she fill his life with a happiness which he feared had passed him by? Besides, didn't he owe it to her? Had he any right, possessing that knowledge, to keep it to himself and not give her what should have been her right? He had argued the question out at length to himself, and he was thinking of it now.

He had not moved in his position for over an hour. Suddenly he lifted his eyes from the table, on which they had been fixed for some time, and stretched one arm forward to lift a pen-holder from a tray. For one moment he held it in his fingers and looked out of the window again, then he bent his head and began to write.

Another November day, a still country scene, with gray tints over all; with sombre lights and shades, and, withal, an effect which an artist's soul would have loved surely, but which the Philistine might have termed dreary. How dreary?—when there are fifty varieties of gray and brown on the earth and in the sky? When the fields are olive-brown, and the trees rich sepia, and the hills are gray, almost to blueness, and the sky is silver and steel? When even the roads, with their wet glaze, have a silvery tinge, and the smoke from the nearest clump of trees matches the even color of the picture? And yet, not even; for it discloses wonders which a sunny summer day leaves hidden. Look at the trees! They are stripped of foliage, but how much more beautiful! It seems as if the soul of them shone out, now that the evanescent body of them had faded, and that their innate nobleness stands distinct and naked before the eye of man. The glory of their leaves has gone, it is true, but what marvellous webs and turns of lace their outlined tendrils and branches make against the opal sky! Designs as intricate and as beautiful as nature ever wove, and yet unnoticed save by the few.

MARION MANNING

There is no sun in the sky, for the sun would be out of place on such a day. The green tints require its warmth and light, and the glowing colors also, but the gray hues of November and the black and white touches of winter have sufficient charm of their own to need no reflected glory.

Two women walked through the brown and yellow leaves that lay strewn on the ground that gray November day, and though they walked slowly and quietly, yet the leaves cried their passing and made it noisy. They were both talking, for they had not seen each other for many months, and had much to tell.

"It was nice of you to come," one of them was saying, "because it's very quiet here, and it was a long journey to take for only two days!"

"It pleased me that you should have asked me," the other returned; "it is a long time since we have been together, and your friendship means much to me."

"I asked you to come," the first one said, "because I wanted to speak to you particularly—because it was important that I should see you."

Her companion glanced at her curiously. "Why, Molly, tell me?" she said.

The girl did not turn her eyes to her, but looked straight ahead through a long vista of trees which lined the road on which they were walking. "It's about myself," she said, at last, "and it's very important to me."

There was another pause. "Aleck Houghton has asked me to marry him," she continued, quietly.

A cry broke from the other's lips, and she seized the girl's arm. "Molly, Molly darling; oh, how glad I am! I can't tell you—I can't tell you how glad I am!"

MARION MANNING

But her companion looked at her very seriously. "Why are you so glad?" she asked.

"Why? Because I've wanted it for so long! I've always wanted it to happen, from the first time I knew you!" She was so pleased, and so excited as well, that she did not notice the girl's expression.

"I am going to ask you a very strange question," Molly said, "but I want you to tell me the truth, for a great deal will depend on it. I have not yet given him his answer."

"Why not? What are you waiting for?" Marion cried.

"I had to see you first. That's why I asked you to come here. I want to know—I want you to tell me—did Aleck ever propose to you?"

Marion's expression changed sensibly with the girl's last words, but her face was inscrutable, and even had Molly looked at her then she would have guessed nothing. As it was, her eyes were averted.

"Why, what an extraordinary question!" Mrs. Manning said, quietly.

"Yes, I suppose it is extraordinary, or it seems so to you, but you see it concerns me very closely. Your answer will mean a great deal to me." She watched the clouds intently, those gray clouds that chased each other across the sky.

Marion stared at the ground and at the crackly dead leaves which seemed to resent their passage through them. "I don't see how!" she said, after a moment.

"That is unimportant," Molly replied, gravely. "The important thing is that you should answer my question."

"But it does make a difference," her friend said, "because it is a question which in reality does not concern you at all! And, if you will excuse my say-

MARION MANNING

ing so, it is also a very presumptuous question to ask."

"That means that you admit it," the girl cried, stopping in her walk to turn and face Mrs. Manning.

"It means nothing of the sort," was the quick answer.

Molly bit her lips, and then, changing her tone, she said, "Marion, for the sake of our friendship, tell me the truth—did he—did he?" There was deep pleading in her voice.

Marion made up her mind quickly. "No, Molly, he did not," she said, without wincing. "We have always been good friends"—she hesitated—"there was a particular link between us, something I can't tell you about, it is some one else's secret—and we were closer friends for that reason. But that is all!"

Molly listened breathlessly, with maybe, at first, a little incredulity; but at those last words her face cleared. She drew a long breath and closed her eyes. Then she turned so white that Marion was frightened, and put her arm round her. "Do you feel faint?" she asked, anxiously.

But the girl drew herself up as the color rushed back to her cheeks, and she opened eyes, which were wet with tears. Taking her friend's hands in hers, she pressed them hard. "I have cared for him since I can remember," she whispered; "but it was worth waiting for!"

Marion's voice was husky as she answered, "Molly, Molly, it's the best thing I have ever known."

They kissed each other and looked long into each other's eyes. "We are not far from the house," Molly said to her, after a little while; "do you mind walking home by yourself? I feel as if I must be alone for a little."

MARION MANNING

"I know, I know," the woman who had been through it all said, "'I were but little happy, if I could say how much.'"

Molly threw her arms round her neck. "Yes, that's it, Marion!" and she escaped from her.

That evening, in Marion's room, as they both sat in their dressing-gowns before the light wood-fire which burned in the chimney-place, Molly Hart explained several things to her friend.

"You probably wondered," she said, "why I asked you that question this afternoon. It was because I had thought, for a long time, that he cared for you, and I did not know whether you might ever. . . . And then when he wrote to me . . . and asked if he could come to see me, to tell me something on which his whole future depended! And more besides—then"—she hesitated—"then the devil came into me, and though I had cared for him all those years, and though I cared still, yet, I thought, he has only come to me because she won't have him, otherwise why shouldn't he have spoken sooner? And my pride said, 'Ask her, and on her answer write to him.' Because I felt that I would rather go on as I have, without him, though it was but poor living"—her voice trembled—"than marry him, feeling that his passion had been for another, and that he was giving me only the poor shreds of affection which were left to him. Oh, I know you will think me strange and unnatural to talk so, but I am not a child. I am older than you, and I understand life better than you think; and from loving, inside of me, all this time, I have grown jealous. For a time I hated you—for a long time, it seemed to me—and that's why I never went to stay with you. I thought you had played me a horrid trick—horrid to me, but very common to most married women. Well, I have found out that I

MARION MANNING

wronged you, and, oh! I am so glad of it, and I ask your forgiveness, Marion. And you, dear—you who have suffered, too, you can understand! But now!" her whole face smiled and softened, and became almost beautiful—"now the devil has gone out of me, and an angel has come in, and I feel as if—" she knelt down and buried her face in her friend's lap.

Marion's eyes were full of tears. "It was worth it," she thought, as she brushed them away.

Molly's engagement gave Marion pleasure, such as she had not felt for several years. It made her realize, for the first time, that the joy of others may give happiness to those who have none of their own; and unselfishly she rejoiced that the friend whom she had wronged should be happy now, even if it was happiness without true knowledge.

When, a few days later, she left Molly's home, she returned to her own house in Washington, and from there wrote to Aleck Houghton.

It was a letter which he always kept, but which he offered to show to the girl he was engaged to. She, however, generously refused to read it. "I know that her friendship meant something particular to you. I should like her to feel that she can write to each of us, and that her letters will be sacred, even to the other." And so it was, and it was many long years before Aleck Houghton ever knew of the part Marion had taken in his engagement. Molly told it to him then, when their married life had brought them blessings manifold, and an all-satisfying happiness; told it to him in the twilight of a November day.

"Supposing it had been that other way," he said to her, "would you have refused to marry me?"

She reflected long over his question. "I might have

MARION MANNING

then," she said, at last. "Knowing you as I do now, I don't think I could have."

He took her hand in his and bent his lips to it. "Then she gave you to me," he said. And Molly did not ask him to explain his words, and the true meaning of them he never told.

X

*"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Roughhew them how we will."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

STRUGGLE as we may, or rebel, does not still the inevitable law of that divinity bend our wills to its decree? Up till now Marion's feet had trodden submissively the path which had been prepared for her, and through the up-hill or the downward grade of its straight or its crooked passing she had still gone forward, although the reason for its twisting and its climbing had not been revealed to her. But now of a sudden she was bidden to turn at right angles to her former course, and to leave the easy level which for almost a year she had travelled over—bidden to seek the unknown; forced to leave her home in Washington, after two months' sojourn there, for a new venture in life, for a journey to southern California.

The reason for this trip had lain close at hand to her. It had been occasioned by the severe illness of Mrs. Caring in the month of January. An attack of pneumonia had brought her perilously near those gates of death, which, to the bravest of us, appear as huge portals of massive and very sombre depth, and on her slow recovery she had found life and health of more difficult holding than she had expected. After consultations, the doctors told her that a winter in Washington would be fatal to her, and that her only chance

MARION MANNING

of a renewal of her past strength would lie in her immediate departure to the even climate of southern California. In her weakness and disturbance of mind at these new orders which were thrust upon her, she sent for Mrs. Manning. "I can't go by myself," she had told her; "will you come with me?" Marion had been perturbed by this request. Her first impulse bade her refuse the invitation unhesitatingly; her second asked for a few days in which to consider the question.

It is unnecessary to say, of course, that her first reason for refusing to accompany her friend had been on account of George Hood. She had not heard from him since he had left Washington the preceding March, and she knew nothing of his whereabouts nor of his doings beyond the fact which Senator Owens had told her of, that he had spent the summer at San Jacinto and that he was going into some business out there, so he believed, for the General himself had not heard from Hood directly for many months. Whether he had changed in his feelings towards her or not, Marion therefore was unable to tell; but she much feared that her presence might reopen the wound which was perhaps healing. The idea of going out to the place that was his home was, from the beginning, distasteful to her; and she shrank from the gossip that must inevitably arise were she to do so. When she heard, however, that Mrs. Caring had decided to go to Pasadena, which is over fifty miles from Santa Barbara and San Jacinto, the matter presented itself to her in a different light. She reflected that she would in all probability not see him at all out there, and, apart from consideration for him, the trip offered her many inducements. The winter was a peculiarly severe one in Washington; she was beginning a little to tire of the place, from which many of her friends

MARION MANNING

were then absent, and the thought of the journey, the soft, delicious climate of the Pacific slope, and the change of scene, attracted her. Colonel Heveril was very well, and quite willing and pleased to spend the rest of the winter at Heveril, where many matters required his attention. Then, again, by going she would escape Molly's wedding, which, if she were in the East, she must be present at; but she had no wish to be there. Then, besides, strongest of all reasons, her going would be an act of friendship to one who had done a great deal for her, and who could find no other companion for the exile of three months which was imposed upon her.

Marion decided to go. A week later, she and Mrs. Caring left Washington for California.

They started on their journey in the first days of February, and, travelling as they did in a private car, the journey was accomplished with scarcely any fatigue. At Pasadena, a little house on the outskirts of the town, and on the eastern side of it, had been leased for them; and in a few days they had settled down in it and felt thoroughly at home.

The San Gabriel Valley, in which Pasadena stands, may perhaps be not inappropriately called the garden of southern California. It lies at the foot of the Sierra Madre Mountains, which skirt it on the north, and flows in uninterrupted fertility from the San Bernardino Rockies to the eastward of it, to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Pasadena, a little town of some twelve thousand inhabitants, is built on rolling, undulating land below the foot-hills of the Sierra Madre, in the midst of the smiling valley, and some eight miles from Los Angeles. Its well-built avenues are lined with rows of pepper-trees, whose pale-green, feathery branches and red berries wave with each puff of air; on other streets, English walnut-trees or indige-

MARION MANNING

nous live-oak vary the line of green which follows the paved or unpaved streets of the town and its surroundings. In the squares and before the houses palms of every variety have been planted—yucca palms, date palms, and fan-leaf palms—and beside them, in strange anomaly, thrive the firs of a colder latitude.

The house which Mrs. Caring had taken was a small, unpretentious house, known by the name of Rose Villa. Its name but faintly suggested the wealth of climbing roses in which it hid itself, not the great bushes burdened with sweet-smelling tea-roses which filled its small garden. The view from the front piazza which faced the sunrise was extensive and beautiful, rich in color and perspective, but also in its quiet distance, unbroken for many miles by more than faint upheavals of the soil, strangely calm and full of peace. But to the left, over the mesas to the foot-hills and to the high peaks behind them, natural strength and grandeur replaced the smiling peace of the cultivated valley.

"Oh, we shall be very happy here!" Marion cried, after they had revelled in the charm wherewith they were surrounded for a full fortnight. "I am so glad you persuaded me to come."

They had finished luncheon and were both sitting on the little front piazza, Mrs. Caring resting on a wicker lounge, Marion sitting on the top step of the little flight of stairs which led from the piazza to the garden. Her position was one of ease and comfort, with both elbows on her knees, and her chin between her clasped hands. Her eyes, half shut, were fixed on the little grass plot of the tiny garden.

"I feel like a cow," she cried, "quite content to browse for the rest of the livelong day—or like a frog, pleased to bask in the sunshine and fall asleep with

MARION MANNING

my eyes open. The air is so still and the warmth so heavenly—and those roses! how they smell!”

“Chut!” whispered Mrs. Caring, and they both listened while a mocking-bird lifted up its voice from the branch of a pepper-tree only a few yards off.

“He’s heard a field-lark—last,” Marion said, when his song was finished.

Mrs. Caring lay with her eyes closed, and Marion was silent, while the bees buzzed in the honeysuckle which covered the railing at her side, and the birds twittered in the trees and bushes, and a humming-bird shimmered in the air close beside her. The scent of roses and of honeysuckle filled her nostrils, and even the earth itself seemed perfumed and sweet this February day. Scents and sounds and sight all disposed to drowsiness, or rather to dreaming—day-dreaming, without consciousness or purpose. A long silence, broken only by the voices of nature, bewitched the imagination of the two women.

Suddenly Marion lifted her eyes, and saw a man standing by the gate of their little garden. She looked at him twice before she knew him, then she saw that it was George Hood. She drew a long breath, but for a moment did not move. Suddenly she sprang to her feet.

“Mr. Hood!” she cried. Mrs. Caring opened her eyes, and Hood, followed by a retriever, walked up the gravel-strewn path to the house. But Marion had already run down the steps to meet him. When she stood before him, looking up into his face, her eyes were lit, her lips smiling. And he gazed at her, but he said no word, and she knew that he had not changed.

“I am so glad you came—so glad!” she said, leaving her hands in his still. “But where do you come from, and how did you know we were here?”

MARION MANNING

"I heard yesterday; you couldn't hope to remain hidden long."

He moved past her to speak to Mrs. Caring, and a few minutes later they were all laughing and talking together on the veranda. "I must first introduce Dan," he said. "Here, Dan! speak to the ladies!" Dan looked at them gravely, but did not move from Hood's side. Marion went up to him and stroked his head. Then he slowly and very solemnly licked her hand. They all laughed. "You see he's not quick at making up his mind," Hood said; "but he's now decided that he likes you. You didn't know, then, that I'd gone into business?" he continued. "I'm in Los Angeles now. Oh, not forever; but it's a company I'm interested in, and they wanted me to do some active work in it. So I'm spending the winter there, at least part of it. A friend of mine at Santa Ana takes pity on my Sundays. But at either place I'm practically next door to you." And he laughed.

It seemed as if some one was impelled to laugh or smile from pure enjoyment every other minute of that delicious afternoon. The sleepy feeling in the air had gone, and was replaced by one of light-heartedness.

"As for me," Marion cried, "I can't see why you ever want to go back to Washington! Just think of the sleet, and the cold, and the wind there! And look at us here, sitting out-of-doors breathing this air, and smelling those roses! Why, one can live like the gods here, and never grow old or wish for anything else."

Hood did not contradict her. He was too happy at that moment to think of unpleasant things, and he fell in readily with her mood. "You know we're pic-nicking," she continued. "We have a Chinese cook, and a Swedish housemaid, and our maids, and that's all. Wait till I fetch you some tea. The Chinaman's

MARION MANNING

out," she explained, from the hall, as she disappeared into a back door.

"I am sure a little help would not come amiss to her," Mrs. Caring said to Hood, with a smile, when they were alone. He barely excused himself for taking her at her word, and, needing no second bidding, he rose, and, closely followed by Dan, found his way into the kitchen, where Marion was trying to lift a heavy kettle from the stove and to pour the water from it into a china teapot which stood on the deal table.

"That's much too heavy for you," he said. He took it from her hands and gravely poured the water into the teapot. She watched him with a quizzical smile.

"Are you turned footman, now that I'm cook?"

"Yes," he said. "Give me something else to do."

She sat down on the edge of the table. "You don't seem to know your duties very well," she said.

She looked so pretty in her humble surroundings that he could think of but one duty that was imperative, and, had he not remembered in time, he would have kissed her then and there. But he was prudent and turned away, saying, "We must have bread-and-butter."

"I'll butter," she cried; "you can cut the bread afterwards." So they fussed about the kitchen and pantry till the tea in the pot had grown black from standing. Then they remembered it and poured it out, but while they were making some fresh tea the door opened and Liza stood before them.

"Law me, Miss Marion," she cried, "what are you doing in here?" She put her hands on her hips and surveyed them with an expression of disapproval which they both found irresistibly funny.

Marion rushed at her. "Don't look so stern, Liza," she exclaimed, laughing, as she put one hand on her

MARION MANNING

old nurse's arm and dragged her forward. "This is Mr. Hood, and he's been helping me to make tea."

"Well, 'tain't your business, Miss Marion, to make tea," Liza rejoined, with a stiff courtesy to George, as she took the plate on which the buttered bread lay and examined it gloomily.

"Isn't it well done?" Hood asked, anxiously, trying to propitiate the good woman.

She looked at him for a moment. "Well, it ain't my idea of good bread-and-butter," she said. Then she turned to Marion. "Now, Miss Marion," she said, in brisk tones, "if you and this gentleman 'll leave the kitchen, I'll fix things up properly." But there was no smile on her black face as they went, and she looked at the door through which they had disappeared for several moments after it had closed. At last she set about her occupation, shaking her head several times as she did so. "I wonder," she said to herself, as, holding the loaf of bread in one hand and the knife in the other, she prepared to cut some new slices—"I wonder if he's after her? Looks mighty like it. But I won't have it! Law me! one marriage's enough for her! And he shall not make my honey unhappy agen, if old Liza can stop it."

Her expression was inscrutable as she carried the tea-things to the piazza, and not all Marion's caresses could make her smile.

The afternoon sped away, and at six o'clock Hood left them to return to Los Angeles.

"When will you come again?" Mrs. Caring asked.

"Sunday, may I, for lunch?" It was settled accordingly.

Marion walked with him to the avenue where the cars ran which would take him back to the town. They saw one coming in the distance. "We are friends, are we not, Mr. Hood?" she said, not looking at him.

MARION MANNING

"Mrs. Manning!" he exclaimed, then hesitated a moment. "It does not depend on me; it is only if you will have it so," he said. There was a double meaning in his words; she pretended, however, not to see it.

"I hope that we always shall be friends," she answered.

"Thank you," he said, very gravely, and then they shook hands, and he jumped on the car.

"She meant to tell me that I was not to expect anything," he thought, as he sank down in his seat and the car started forward. "Perhaps I was unwise to have come—and yet, I think not. This afternoon was worth a lifetime, and there are others to come! Besides, I will make her change her mind. I will yet make her feel as I want her to feel. She must!"

He returned to Los Angeles, and the ghosts of his past hopes awoke again and were quickened into what he thought were realities. A well-fought life alone had made it possible for him to struggle through the past year. But he had struggled through it and it was past now, and the same energy and strength which had made him overcome obstacles in his career now made him feel confident of his success with the woman he loved. For in his life he had met difficulties on an equal ground; he had not trampled circumstances under his feet, but he had known how to seize the opportunities to circumvent them. Perhaps it was because the principles which his mother had taught him and which he had inherited from a race of dogged, true-hearted men, had united with a mind and will bent on accomplishment, that he had steered through failures and would live to achieve success; or perhaps it was because he had only aimed for the right things, because his ideals had been high, and because his intense love of country had dominated his life from the beginning. For I cannot help feeling that any man

MARION MANNING

whose patriotism is of that deep nature which strikes at the heart of things, will succeed in that which others would deem impossible.

And in that short year since he had returned to his constituency he had worked ceaselessly and to good effect. He was fast demolishing the false ideas which an unscrupulous politician had instilled into the minds of the voters, and his power, far from being weakened by being out of office, was gaining ground daily. This constant struggle had helped him undoubtedly where his own trouble was concerned, though outward successes would never compensate for that greater grief of which the world knew nothing. The news of Marion's arrival in Pasadena came as an unexpected shock to him. A shock of surprise first, of pain that she had come into his life again to make it harder to live; but with a feeling of joy afterwards, because he reasoned to himself that Providence had brought her to him, and, by so doing, urged the overstepping of the prudent bounds, and the grasping of that which was within his reach.

Marion, meanwhile, flattered herself with the idea that she had conveyed her meaning to him forcibly and yet tactfully. "He now knows that I have not changed; that he must expect nothing from me. That makes things much simpler."

So that she was not on her guard when he came again, and yet again; when every week found him spending the first day of it at the Rose Villa; when from conversations in which Mrs. Caring joined on the piazza, or in the drawing-room, came long walks and even more delightful rides when he and she were alone together.

How much he taught her in those hours of companionship! How his influence reassumed its old control over her! How he brought the beauty of the world

MARION MANNING

and the beauty of life forcibly before her eyes, and how his patriotism worked on her! "It's so worth living for, this country of ours," he said once to her. "Believe me, I would give much to make you care, as I care for it. Not only California, not only politics, but the whole country, and all that has been done in it for truth, and for right living. As I grow older, it seems to me the only thing worth fighting for: her greatness, her glory."

It was the only thought, except one, that ever moved him; strong, fighting man as he was, whose soul was full of hidden beauty, that, the land he cared for—that, and she—Marion! She turned to him once with her eyes shining. "I think that I may grow to care for it, as you care for it." He had been filled with happiness when she said that.

One day Mrs. Caring taxed her with what she called her flirtation with him. "Any one can see that he is only happy when he is with you, and you are certainly giving him encouragement."

Marion flushed up angrily. "How absurd!" she said. "I have no more idea of flirting with him than of flying."

"Ah, I am very glad! Because that means, then, that you intend to accept him, doesn't it?" retorted her friend.

Marion tried to control her voice. "I shall never marry again," she said, "and Mr. Hood knows it as well as every one else. We are great friends, that's all."

"I've learned to be sceptical of such friendship," Mrs. Caring said, "and you are too pretty for a man to be with you constantly and feel nothing but friendship for you."

"How stupid she is, not to see," Mrs. Caring reflected, after Marion had gone out. "It would be the

MARION MANNING

best thing for her. But it's useless my talking. Arguing won't convince any one as blind as that. Because, I think she is in love with him really, only doesn't know it. If she had only met him before John Manning!"

But there was another person in the house who thought very differently, and that was Liza, and one evening when Marion was going to bed she took the opportunity of speaking to her about Hood.

She had helped her mistress to undress, and had tidied up the room, but she still lingered. "Miss Marion," she said at last, with a great effort.

"Yes, Liza, what is it?" Marion was in bed, reading, and did not raise her eyes from her book.

Liza wrung her hands. "Law, miss, I'm so afraid you'll be angry with me! It's about Massa Hood."

Marion put her book down. "What about him?" she asked, sharply.

"Law, honey, I don't want you to marry him." Liza stood by the bed and mopped her eyes violently.

"Why, Liza, and what's got into you?" Marion said, with astonishment. "Don't you like Mr. Hood?"

A shrewd expression crossed the colored woman's face. She put her finger to her lips. "Law, Miss Marion," she said, in a low voice, "I ain't sure; but I'se heard things about him." She looked very wise, and her eyes were as round as saucers. But her simple wiles did not mislead Marion, and she only laughed at her.

"You silly old thing," she said, "you couldn't have heard anything that wasn't good about him. But you needn't worry, Liza," she added, in a serious tone, "I am not going to marry again. Go to bed now, and don't think about me any more."

After Liza had left her, Marion tormented herself

MARION MANNING

with many questions, but she could find no answers, that were at all satisfying, to most of them. One thought only reiterated itself in her mind many times:

“Another marriage would be impossible! I could never bring myself to do it.”

XI

*"Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life!
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray!"*

—BYRON.

GEORGE HOOD was riding to Pasadena. March had come and gone, and the oft-blessed April of the Sierra slopes was gladdening the land with the loud-voiced cry of accomplished spring; and yet it seemed as if the whole winter had been one continuous spring, as if the rains had worked their magic from the start. But the color had come slowly. Now the country-side was decked with the hues of the gladdest rainbows. The sun was high in the heavens as he rode west, with his eyes almost dazzled with the gorgeousness of the color display which rioted in undisturbed supremacy on every side. Across the plains and the fields to her house! With anticipation and hope surging within him, with a song of thanksgiving in his heart for the glad nature, and for the inestimable privilege of life. A hard-spent year had left its dead leaves behind him, and to-day saw the petals of the still-hidden flower loosen and shiver with the thrill of expectation; to-morrow it would glow in the full triumph of a conquered world. Why heed the tears and sorrows that are past, why remember the failures of a day that is gone? A storm at sea brings terror into the heart of the bravest traveller, but why try to recall the tossing, angry waves, when a blue sky re-

MARION MANNING

flects in bluer waters its heaven-born peace! If he had despaired before, he would rejoice now. If she had grieved, all would be forgotten when—when their hands met—and their hearts beat, each to each. He knew that she cared for him; he had seen it in her eyes; for the past week she had not hidden it; it had trembled in her voice, it had glistened through lids that had not always been dry.

The details of the passing gardens, orchards, and woods touched him faintly, and his mind, soaring over them, dwelt on other joys—joys which he was about to grasp, joys which his whole past life had prepared him for. A sweet-voiced bird from a hedge of briar-roses trilled and carolled beside him, and evoked an answering smile in his eyes.

He had suffered much for the moment that was coming; he had dreamt of it, longed for it, when the future was barren, and now that it was rich in promise he hugged the thought of it to himself, not hurrying to lose a needless moment of that anticipation of joy which was now his. He looked back on the work he had accomplished, on the existence he had humanized, on the soul that he had awakened; for a soul was there once again after its short slumber, shining through her, controlling her words, ennobling her actions. The true beauty of heart and nature which he had felt was really hers through the darkness of suffering, had crept through the tangled obstacles which had hidden it. He saw it now as he had hoped to see it. “And *I* have done it—it is *I* who have worked the change in her!” was his cry of pride and exultation. A love, working miracles, manifesting itself in a nineteenth-century, prosaic world, had been his for the woman who was to be his wife. His wife! He repeated the words to himself. She, Marion, to be his—now, in the glowing light of youth, with the sun’s

MARION MANNING

rays lighting on them and warming them, inciting them to the achievements of a present fairer than the most remote past; and later, too, after the mid-day would have retreated, and the soft twilight of the future be on them, when they would have lived their present, and have seen their work finished, living on in those young lives whose brows would bear upon them the laurel of inherited endeavor; and last, when the darkness would have closed upon them, hand in hand, not fearing, while their feet would skirt the ground, and the stars would guide them surely to the vast infinity of to-morrow. . . . "She and I. Marion to be mine—mine alone." In a short hour to see the love in her eyes start into life, to have all memories of sadness forgotten in a happiness which would be a happiness unheard of before, unsung by the poets, undreamt of by the prophets!

His hands lay on the horse's neck, who, conscious of his master's absent-mindedness, slackened his stride, and walked lazily in the direction to which only the automatic pressure of the reins still held him; after a while, stopping entirely to bend his head and crop some grasses at his feet. "Here, what are you doing, Folly? Wake up! Go on!" For George Hood had realized that several miles still lay before him, and that too much dreaming hinders action. Folly quickened her pace, the wind flew by them, and the trees rushed past them. And Marion! Every moment brought him nearer to her, every minute flying by made the distance closer, the future nearer—love more sure.

At last he saw the house that sheltered her, the house that was deified by her presence. Five minutes later he stopped before the Rose Villa. He sprang from his horse and threw the reins over a convenient post, and then—he hesitated. Had he been too sure? Had

MARION MANNING

he sung his pæan before the victory was certain? No, God would let this be—would give him the joy he craved for! He walked resolutely up the steps and rang the bell.

Half an hour later the front door opened again and George Hood stood on the little piazza. Slowly he walked down the steps and through the garden to the wooden post by the road-side where his horse was hitched. It took him some time to take the reins from the post and to gather them in his hands; then he bent down to pick up his whip, which had fallen on the ground. "What a clumsy fool I am!" he said, with a curious laugh, as, mounting rather awkwardly, he pulled the reins with a jerk and gave the astonished Folly a sharp dig with the spurs. The mare plunged forward, and a few moments later horse and rider were out of sight.

Three hours later, Marion, who was in the sitting-room, heard excited voices in the hall. She went to the door and opened it. Mrs. Caring and her maid and Liza were standing close together.

"What's happened?" Marion asked.

Mrs. Caring turned a white face to her. "Marie and Liza have just come back from the town. They heard there that Mr. Hood had had a bad accident."

"An accident!" Marion repeated, automatically, leaning up against the wall.

"Yes," Mrs. Caring continued. "Marie, tell Mrs. Manning what you heard—"

"Well, madame," the woman explained, "they said his horse had fallen jumping a big ditch, and that Monsieur Hood had been hurt—badly!"

Marion looked at her intently, but with a dazed expression in her eyes.

MARION MANNING

Liza had retreated to the end of the hall, and from that distance watched her mistress furtively.

Mrs. Caring went up to Marion. "Hadn't you better go to him?" she said, putting her arm round her.

Marion roused herself. "Yes," she said, hurriedly; "but where is he? How badly is he hurt? He's not—" she stopped suddenly.

"No, dear, he's not dead," Mrs. Caring said, gently; "but I am afraid he must be badly hurt. Shall I send for a trap? He's in a house about five miles the other side of Pasadena."

So they telephoned for one, and, until it came, Marion sat by the open window, looking out of it, but not speaking one word. In less than half an hour a light buck-board stood at the gate. Mrs. Caring then proposed to go with Marion, but her offer was refused.

"No, I would rather not," the other said. "It isn't necessary, and—if somebody must go—Liza can."

In a very few minutes they were in the trap and were being rapidly driven towards the place where George Hood had been taken after his accident.

It was the longest drive Marion ever remembered taking. It was the longest seven miles she had ever known. When she found out that the driver knew about the accident, she plied him with questions.

"He's in a cottage, ma'am, and they sent to Pasadena for the doctor. But he ain't dead, and that's all I know."

It was slight comfort, but it gave her hope.

"Oh, hurry, please," she said to him, over and over again, and each time he answered:

"They're going as fast as they can, ma'am."

Then Marion was silent again, and Liza never ventured to speak to her. The old colored woman's mind was greatly disturbed. She felt that she ought to be glad that Mr. Hood had had an accident and might

MARION MANNING

die, because then, of course, her darling would never marry him; but she didn't like to see the expression that was in her eyes, because it reminded her of what she had seen there years before when Mr. Manning was alive, and when she, his wife, had been unhappy—very unhappy. If now she was going to be as unhappy as all that if Mr. Hood died, why, it would perhaps be better if he lived. If Liza had been a philosopher she would have thought: "What a queer world!"

Beside her, Marion sat silent, and in that silence the veil with which her eyes had been covered was torn from her, while she realized too late what she had discarded; when she saw things as they really were—the pricelessness of the gift which his love should have been to her, the knowledge of what her own heart had held, and how she had thrown it away. And worse, how, for a selfish fear, for an unreasonable dread, she had sent him away—to meet death. For now she doubted not that it was she who was the cause of it. She remembered the hunted look in his eyes when he had left her, with all his strength blotted from his face. It was she who had weakened him; it was she who had let him go in his misery to seek—something more profitable. The realization of it made her lips feel dry and her forehead hot. And now she was on her way to see him again—before he died—for the idea that he would surely die had impressed itself firmly on her mind. But what if she should not arrive in time?—in time to tell him what she knew? . . . She prayed with her whole soul to see him alive once again. "Don't let this awful thing happen—that he should die—before I reach him! I want to tell him something first! God, hear me! I want to give him something—before he dies." She did not pray that he might live, because she thought it useless. Then it seemed to her as if the dryness from her lips had crept down into her throat,

MARION MANNING

and that it was making breathing difficult. Suddenly, as a flash across her memory, a scene painted itself. A room with a big fire burning in a grate, and an old man staring at the blazing logs. "The fire is like suffering," she almost heard him say. "It breaks, but it builds again"—the voice grew fainter; "the fire will give you sight." She shut her eyes. "This was it."

Then she opened them again. "Hurry, hurry—you must hurry!" she cried out aloud, while in her heart she prayed again: "Oh, do not let this thing be! Let me touch him, and speak to him again! Let me tell him! . . . Oh, God, have mercy!"

The man at her side said, "There's the house."

A small wooden house stood by the road-side. Two carriages were before its door; the buck-board stopped beside them with a jerk.

"There, now; you can get out."

Blindly she let Liza help her out; blindly she walked to the door of the house. Several people were in the front parlor. "Where is he?" she asked. There was that in her face that barred questions. Some one came forward and opened a door into an adjoining room. "In there."

A man in dark clothes was bending over a bed in one corner of the room. As Marion came in he turned, and then came to her.

"Are you a relation of his?" he asked, in a whisper.

"No," she said, "but a friend. I must see him."

"I don't know that you can," he objected. "He can't be allowed to talk. It might kill him."

A look of despair crossed her face. The doctor noticed it.

"Wait a moment," he said; "the trouble with him is that the desire for life doesn't seem to be in him. If you could make him want to live!" He looked at her

MARION MANNING

with hesitation, doubting his sudden inspiration. But her face had lit up at his words.

"Is there any hope?" she asked, eagerly, breathlessly.

"I can't say—perhaps—I hope so." He turned back to the bed.

But she caught hold of his arm. "Will you leave me with him alone? I think—I can do something."

He paused a moment and looked at her again. "It's a chance," he said, and he went out of the room, closing the door after him.

Marion moved to the bed and she saw George Hood. She looked at his motionless figure, and pressed her hands together tightly. Suddenly his eyes opened and he saw her. A smile crossed his face, like a bar of light. The tears came to her eyes and blinded her. "George—George!"

He moved his hands slowly over the coverlet to touch her fingers, and when he had found them he said, in a weak voice: "You mustn't be frightened. How good you were—to come—it's difficult to thank you enough."

"Oh, you mustn't talk," she said, brushing the tears away. "But I must say something." Her fingers closed on his and she tried to speak, but the words seemed further away than they had been. With all the strength that was hers she prayed for the power to tell him what she had come to say. And as she looked at him, with a new, great pain at her heart, she fell on her knees by him. "George, George," she sobbed, "I love you!" She put her arms round him and hid her face against him. But he gave a great cry, and partly rose in the bed, and taking her face between his trembling hands, he peered into her eyes.

"Marion, say it again," he cried, while a fearful joy crept into his face.

MARION MANNING

"I love you," she said, between her sobs. "I didn't know it before; but I know it now, and I wanted you to know it. I want you to forgive me for having hurt you so much, and for having made life so hard for you. Oh, George, won't you try to live, so that I can show you?"

He closed his eyes for a moment, and there was silence in the room.

"Put your face close to mine," he said at last, and as she obeyed he whispered. "They said it was an even chance, but I didn't want to live before; but now, Marion—if I could feel that by living—I could give you back what you have lost, and—that I could make your life happier for having loved me—if I could feel that—if you could promise me that, Marion—" His face grew gray with anxiety.

"I promise," she said, and she bent and kissed him on the lips.

Then his face was lit as by a light from afar off, and there were no more words spoken between those two. When she left the room to call the doctor, and walked into the dark parlor, where the silent, waiting group stood, her eyes were luminous, for the fire of his soul had kindled hers into life.

"The full star that ushers in the even."

—SHAKESPEARE.

A MAN and a woman were sitting side by side in the little compartment called drawing-room, which is a part of every Pullman car. The train was on its way to Washington. It was in the late afternoon. The sun had set, but there were a few pink tinges in the western sky still. The trees were bare of leaves. Winter's first touch was on the country. The landscape was flat and uninteresting, but yet, to the two who watched it, replete of charm.

There had been a long silence between them. Suddenly she turned her head and looked at him. He smiled into her eyes and put his hand on hers, closing his fingers on it tightly.

"Marion, Marion," he whispered.

Then she looked away from him again and spoke. "I want to tell you something," she said. He pressed her hand tighter, but did not answer. "It seems a queer thing to say," she went on, "but you will understand it, I know. It's about John Manning. All these years I had never really forgiven him—until, until a short time ago. It was you who made me forgive him. And—and the world looks very different to me now, because the last black cloud has gone out of the sky. I only see the sun before me now."

"My darling," he said, low. "And you are happy, aren't you?"

"Happy?" she repeated after him. "When—we're

MARION MANNING

on our way back to Washington again? When you have won every fight? When I can only see the sun before me now—and—and—” She looked out of the window again.

It had grown dark. Above the horizon only was a gleam of light, and in the sky a single star shone.

“And the evening star,” she said.

THE END

BY LILIAN BELL

SIR JOHN AND THE AMERICAN GIRL. Post
8vo, \$1 15 *net*.

THE EXPATRIATES. A Novel. Post 8vo, Cloth,
\$1 50.

AS SEEN BY ME. With Frontispiece.

THE INSTINCT OF STEP-FATHERHOOD. Sto-
ries.

FROM A GIRL'S POINT OF VIEW.

The author is so good-humored, quaint, and clever that she has not left a dull page in her book.—*Saturday Evening Gazette*, Boston.

A LITTLE SISTER TO THE WILDERNESS. A
Novel. New Edition.

Written from the heart and with rare sympathy. . . . The writer has a natural and fluent style, and her dialect has the double excellence of being novel and scanty. The scenes are picturesque and diversified.—*Churchman*, N. Y.

THE UNDER SIDE OF THINGS. A Novel.
With a Portrait of the Author.

This is a tenderly beautiful story. . . . This book is Miss Bell's best effort, and most in the line of what we hope to see her proceed in, dainty and keen and bright, and always full of the fine warmth and tenderness of splendid womanhood.—*Interior*, Chicago.


THE LOVE AFFAIRS OF AN OLD MAID.

So much sense, sentiment, and humor are not often united in a single volume.—*Observer*, N. Y.

16mo, Ornamented Cloth, Uncut Edges and Gilt Tops, \$1 25
per volume.

Postage Extra on Net Books.

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

 Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage pre-
paid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on
receipt of the price.

By GEORGE DU MAURIER

THE MARTIAN. A Novel. Illustrated by the Author. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$1 75; Three-quarter Calf, \$3 50; Three-quarter Crushed Levant, \$4 50; *Édition de Luxe*, Full Vellum, \$10 00. (A Glossary of the French and Latin expressions in the story is included.)

SOCIAL PICTORIAL SATIRE. Reminiscences and Appreciations of English Illustrators of the Past Generation. With Illustrations by the Author and Others. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$1 50.

A LEGEND OF CAMELOT. Pictures and Verses. Oblong 4to, Cloth, Ornamental, Full Gilt, \$5 00.

TRILBY. A Novel. Illustrated by the Author. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$1 75; Three-quarter Calf, \$3 50; Three-quarter Crushed Levant, \$4 50.


PETER IBBETSON. With an Introduction by his Cousin, Lady **** ("Madge Plunket"). Edited and Illustrated by GEORGE DU MAURIER. Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$1 50. Three-quarter Calf, \$3 25; Three-quarter Crushed Levant, \$4 25.

ENGLISH SOCIETY. Sketched by GEORGE DU MAURIER. About 100 Illustrations. With an Introduction by W. D. HOWELLS. Oblong 4to, Cloth, Ornamental, \$3 50.

Mr. du Maurier's style has much distinction—a blending of refinement and unconventionality that is delightful. It is vehemently alive, moreover; there is not a word which could be spared without marring the effect, not a line which does not fall into rank with vigorous step. It has poetic grace, too, a musical and witching rhythm here and there.—*New York Tribune*.

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

 Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on receipt of the price.

BY S. R. CROCKETT

KIT KENNEDY—COUNTRY BOY. Illustrated by
A. I. KELLER.

THE RED AXE. A Novel Illustrated by FRANK
RICHARDS.

Mr. Crockett can always be depended upon for a good story, and his many admirers will not be disappointed by "The Red Axe," which is an uncommonly strong novel of adventure.—*Brooklyn Standard-Union.*

LOCHINVAR. A Novel. Illustrated by T. DE THUL-
STRUP.


Admirers of S. R. Crockett will find occasion for neither surprise nor disappointment in his new story, "Lochinvar." It is just what we might expect of him after the assurance his other writings have given of the stability of his capacity for fine romantic fiction. He gives every indication that he is in the plenitude of his powers and graces as a constructionist and narrator.—*Washington Times.*

THE GRAY MAN. A Novel. Illustrated by SEY-
MOUR LUCAS, R.A.

A strong book, . . . masterly in its portrayals of character and historic events.—*Boston Congregationalist.*

Post 8vo, Cloth, Ornamental, \$1 50 per volume.

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

 Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico, on receipt of the price.

MARY E. WILKINS' WORKS

THE PORTION OF LABOR. Illustrated. \$1 50.

The story of an American girl.

UNDERSTUDIES. Illustrated. \$1 25.

SILENCE, and Other Stories. Second Edition.
\$1 25.

JEROME: A POOR MAN. \$1 50.

A NEW ENGLAND NUN, and other Stories. \$1 25.

They are all interesting, full of careful studies of life and nature, written wholly without pretence or affectation, with a feeling of sweet human sympathy, gilded by pleasant touches of humor.—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, writing of Miss Wilkins' stories.

JANE FIELD. A Novel. \$1 25.

This is one of the cleverest and best-thought-out books of the season.—*Black and White*. Is an exceptionally clever book; every line tells.—*Guardian*.

PEMBROKE. \$1 50.

Miss Mary Wilkins has fairly surpassed her predecessors in this kind of fiction.—*The Times*. This is the gem of Miss Wilkins's very remarkable production.—*The Spectator*.


MADELON. \$1 25.

YOUNG LUCRETIA, and other Stories. Illustrated. \$1 25.

We know of no one who can write a short story with such art and simplicity as Miss Wilkins, and every tale is invested with a charm and a pathos which it would be hard to match.—*Birmingham Daily Gazette*.

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

 Any of the above works will be sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, Canada, or Mexico on receipt of the price.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

WIDENER LIBRARY

